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HEADLINE	07/06 WA agency to probe police deadly force
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SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/politics/new-agency-months-away-starting-police-investigations/281-0774d407-bf06-4e20-9c51-517454953537
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. — A new state agency was mandated to start investigating police use of deadly force cases on July 1, but it appears it actually won't be ready to handle those investigations for months.</p> <p>"It's just a lot to get done. Standing up an office from nothing is incredibly difficult," said Roger Rogoff, appointed last month by Gov. Jay Inslee to head up the state's newest agency, the Office of Independent Investigations.</p> <p>Under current law, when a police officer in the state uses deadly force, detectives from surrounding agencies, typically from the same county, investigate the incident and refer the case to county prosecutors for charging decisions.</p> <p>Under the state law passed last year, the newly formed agency and its up to 80 civilian employees has the authority to conduct investigations of deadly force use by police officers. Those investigations from the state will be the ones presented to county prosecutors.</p> <p>Rogoff said it's not clear how his agency will handle future investigations.</p> <p>There are dozens of positions to fill, policies and procedures to write. The agency does not have a permanent workspace, or even a state logo yet.</p> <p>When asked about what the public might think about the agency missing its first deadline, Rogoff said the work is too important to rush.</p> <p>"I think we'd be falling out of the gate if we started conducting investigations when we weren't ready to conduct investigations," said Rogoff. "If we sent people out to crime scenes who stumbled all over themselves and didn't know what they were doing."</p> <p>Rogoff, a former King County prosecutor and Superior Court judge, said the judicial system is due for the kind of changes that could result from his new agency.</p> <p>"Anytime you don't have trust after some of the instances we've seen over the last ten year, there's absolutely room to do it differently," said Rogoff. "And that's what we're hoping to do."</p> <p>No other state has an agency that independently investigates incidents of police use of deadly force.</p> <p>"Our job is to do confident and unbiased, anti-racist investigations and to do this in the right way," said Rogoff.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/06 WSF alternate schedules for staff shortage
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/travel/washington-state-ferries-reduced-schedules-staff-shortages/281-f58fd9f1-d657-48b8-81af-351e6ae797bf
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Starting Wednesday, Washington State Ferries (WSF) said most of its routes will operate on alternate schedules due to a mounting staff shortage that has worsened since the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>WSF said in a public bulletin the changes will lead to "more predictable and reliable service systemwide" for customers. The agency said it plans to notify people when full service can temporarily be restored to a particular route.</p> <p>The following routes will have an alternate schedule on July 6:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Port Townsend/Coupeville Alternate Service: Reservations Available • Seattle/Bremerton Alternate Service • 2-Boat Fauntleroy/Vashon, 2-Boat Fauntleroy / Southworth, 2-boat Southworth/Vashon

While the following routes are running restored summer schedules:

- [Anacortes/San Juan Islands](#): Reservations available
- [Mukilteo/Clinton](#)
- [Edmonds / Kingston](#)
- [Seattle/Bainbridge Island](#)
- [Point Defiance/Tahlequah](#)

WSF said the [schedule page online](#) shows the currently active schedules in the top section, though active schedules can change daily depending on crew availability. The [Travel Alert Bulletins](#) page will be updated with any changes.

The alternative service schedule means WSF has around 30% fewer sailings than its regular winter schedule.

Officials are prioritizing following ferry routes based on ridership, service performance, availability and vessel and crew availability in the event that they can restore full service. Anacortes/San Juan Islands was first on the priority list, while the Seattle/Bainbridge Island route was second.

[WSF's COVID-19 Service Restoration Plan](#) outlined the several challenges the agency faces in resuming full service for its riders.

Once a route is operating on an alternate, reduced schedule it could move to "trial service," meaning the route will operate on its regular seasonal schedule on a trial basis. If the route can operate at a 95% reliability rate — how often they complete a scheduled route — for three weeks, WSF could restore "full service."

The agency's goal is to complete 99% of its scheduled sailings, but in 2021 it fell short with a 98.3% mark. From 2018 through 2020 - before the pandemic - WSF said its service reliability exceeded 99%.

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HEADLINE	07/06 Snohomish Co. Volunteer Search, Rescue
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/non-profit-search-and-rescue-seeks-its-own-lifeline
GIST	<p>SNOHOMISH, Wash. - Snohomish County Volunteer Search & Rescue (SAR) crews are always rushing toward danger, risking their own lives to save strangers in perilous situations. Now, they're calling out for their own lifeline.</p> <p>Grants and donations normally sustain Snohomish County Volunteer Search & Rescue, but the pandemic disrupted their income streams. The organization is hoping county officials will fill the gap with federal stimulus dollars.</p> <p>"The value is seen by the entire community," said Snohomish County Sheriff Adam Fortney.</p> <p>Fortney says a small portion of his agency's budget helps pay for some of SAR's operating costs and the rest is covered by the non-profit. Year after year, volunteers on foot and from the air risk their lives to help those in danger close to home, or injured and stranded in remote areas of the backcountry.</p> <p>"All of our techs are EMTs and paramedics in the county," said SAR Chief Pilot, Bill Quistorf.</p> <p>During a recent podcast interview, Fortney spoke with Quistorf about his team and their roles as a matter of public service.</p> <p>"The rest of our pilots and crews are volunteers," Quistorf added.</p>

	<p>The non-profit penned a letter earlier this year to county elected leadership, asking for relief using federal stimulus money. The pandemic severely hampered the organization's ability to fundraise at the same time when calls for services increased.</p> <p>The letter detailed how the organization could use less than \$1 million of the \$160 million the county expected to receive from the federal government via the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.</p> <p>Stimulus dollars would pay for critical infrastructure improvements and equipment upgrades as parts of its facility and vehicle fleet that has become obsolete.</p> <p>While federal guidelines restrict how local governments spend rescue funds, the county expects half of the money to address long-term and capital project needs.</p> <p>As Western Washington continues to grow in population, more adventure seekers may likely trek into the wilderness. Fortney believes investing recovery dollars into SAR today will end up saving lives tomorrow.</p> <p>"Any time we're supporting what they're doing out there, it's going to go towards saving lives in the long run," he said. "That sounds like a bold statement, but that's what these folks do every day."</p> <p>The Snohomish County Council is expected to reveal how it plans to spend the recovery dollars later this summer.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/06 When is the next Covid booster shot?
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/07/06/world/coronavirus-newsletter-intl-07-06-22/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Covid-19 vaccine boosters might look a little different by the end of this year.</p> <p>US regulators advised manufacturers last week to update the Covid-19 vaccine in time for the fall booster program with new formulas that would better protect against the more infectious Omicron subvariants, which are dominating coronavirus transmissions in the United States.</p> <p>"We have advised manufacturers seeking to update their COVID-19 vaccines that they should develop modified vaccines that add an omicron BA.4/5 spike protein component to the current vaccine composition... so that the modified vaccines can potentially be used starting in early to mid-fall 2022," Dr. Peter Marks, director of the US Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research, said last Thursday. The FDA has not advised manufacturers to change the primary vaccine for those who still have not gotten the Covid-19 vaccination.</p> <p>On the same day, the Biden administration announced that it had agreed to purchase 105 million doses of Pfizer/BioNTech's Covid-19 vaccine for delivery later this year. "This may include adult Omicron-adapted Covid-19 vaccines, subject to authorization," Pfizer said in a statement.</p> <p>While current vaccines have been providing strong protection against severe disease since they were rolled out at the end of 2020, Omicron's BA.4 and BA.5 subvariants are better able to evade immunity from vaccines and previous infections, Jen Christensen reports.</p> <p>BA.4/5 have been linked to soaring cases in the United Kingdom, Portugal, Germany and France. And the rise in infections comes as a pre-print study -- based on the health records of more than 5.6 million people treated in the Veterans Affairs health system -- found that repeatedly catching Covid-19 appears to increase the chances that a person will face new and sometimes lasting health problems after their infection.</p> <p>As cases rise, some in the US are asking when the younger population will receive another jab. Marks said last Tuesday that there will be a conversation going forward to determine who needs another booster and what that booster will look like. At the moment, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) only recommends the fourth dose to those over 50 years old and the immunocompromised.</p>

	In the meantime, vaccine makers Pfizer, Moderna and Novavax have already been testing updated versions of their vaccines, including some bivalent vaccines that target Omicron variants.
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HEADLINE	07/07 Shanghai, Chinese cities tackle outbreaks
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-back-alert-china-battles-covid-outbreaks-2022-07-07/
GIST	<p>SHANGHAI/BEIJING, July 7 (Reuters) - Millions of people in Shanghai queued for a third day of mass COVID-19 testing on Thursday as authorities in several Chinese cities scrambled to stamp out new outbreaks that have rekindled worries about growth in the world's second-largest economy.</p> <p>Unless local officials succeed in preventing the virus from spreading, they could be compelled to invoke prolonged, major restrictions on residents' movement, under China's "dynamic zero COVID" strategy.</p> <p>Having just emerged from a painful two-month lockdown, Shanghai was again on high alert as it raced to isolate infections linked to karaoke services that had been taking place illegally.</p> <p>Urging karaoke joints to abide by COVID rules and make sure customers had undergone tests, Shanghai resident Qiu Shijia had a message for their owners: "Don't push your luck."</p> <p>Qiu was among a number residents Reuters spoke with in China's most populous city that were wary of a return to restrictions that had caused mental stress, and financial hardship for many people, and disrupted global supply chains and overseas trade.</p> <p>"A resurgence of Omicron is not an issue in most other countries, but it remains a predominant issue for the Chinese economy," Nomura analysts wrote in a note, referring to the highly transmissible COVID variant.</p> <p>As China is "by far the largest manufacturing centre in the world, any new waves of Omicron are likely to have a non-negligible impact", they added.</p> <p>Residents in many of Shanghai's 16 districts were ordered to take two compulsory COVID-tests between Tuesday and Thursday.</p> <p>They frequently take self-administered tests in order to enter shopping malls or travel on public transport, and they also have to take part in city-wide testing every weekend till end-July.</p> <p>Shanghai reported 54 new locally transmitted COVID cases for Wednesday, versus 24 the previous day. Only two of those 54 cases were found in the community, with the rest in quarantine.</p> <p>Another 50 compounds and venues were locked down on Thursday in the commercial hub, taking the total to 81.</p> <p>PLAYING WHACK-A-MOLE WITH OUTBREAKS</p> <p>Overall, mainland China reported 338 new local COVID cases for Wednesday, down from 353, with no new deaths, numbers which most countries would now consider insignificant.</p> <p>Most cases, 167 of them, were in the eastern Anhui province where more than 1 million people in small towns are locked down.</p> <p>In the capital Beijing, four new infections were reported, down from six the previous day.</p> <p>From July 11, most people entering crowded venues, such as libraries, cinemas and gyms, will have to have been vaccinated.</p>

	<p>After finding one COVID case involving someone who had arrived from Shanghai, the town of Xinjiang in the northern Shanxi province tested almost its entire 280,000 population, suspended taxis, ride hailing and bus services, and closed various entertainment venues.</p> <p>In a different province, Shaanxi, which reported 4 new cases, the cultural and tourism authority requested travel agencies to cancel group tours in its capital Xian, famed for its Terracota Army.</p> <p>The eastern Jiangsu province, which has cancelled a major sporting event scheduled for November, reported 61 infections.</p> <p>China has said its uncompromising COVID policy, as opposed to a global trend of co-existing with the virus, was saving lives and the "temporary" economic costs were worth bearing.</p> <p>Justifying the strategy, officials have contrasted the millions of COVID-linked deaths around the world, compared with China's reported the death toll of 5,226.</p> <p>Analysts warn, however, that some costs may become permanent if China's debt burden increases and if curbs lead to investors and talent reconsidering their presence in the country.</p> <p>China is planning to set up a 500 billion yuan (\$75 billion) state infrastructure fund to revive the economy, two people with knowledge of the matter have told Reuters.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/07 WHO: monkeypox cases rise 77% in week
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/health-united-nations-world-organization-8001ecbbba2d5dc42ea3f87becdc61cb
GIST	<p>GENEVA (AP) — The World Health Organization on Thursday reported a 77% weekly increase in the number of lab-confirmed monkeypox cases, to more than 6,000 worldwide, and two more deaths in parts of Africa where the virus has circulated for years.</p> <p>Most of the cases were reported in Europe and Africa. The U.N. health agency said the mysterious outbreak continues to mainly affect men who have had sex with men, and that other population groups showed no signs of sustained transmission.</p> <p>WHO said it counted 6,027 laboratory-confirmed cases of monkeypox from 59 countries as of Monday, an increase of 2,614 cases since its last count for the week that ended June 27. It said three people have now died in connection with the outbreak, all of them in Africa.</p> <p>The agency said nine additional countries had reported cases, while 10 countries had not reported any new cases for more than three weeks, which is the maximum incubation period.</p> <p>WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said Wednesday he remained “concerned by the scale and spread of the virus,” noting that over 80% of the cases turned up in Europe. He said he would convene the next meeting of a WHO expert panel that is monitoring the outbreak for no later than the week of July 18.</p> <p>Most monkeypox patients experience fever, body aches, chills and fatigue. People with more serious illness may develop a rash and lesions on the face and hands that can spread to other parts of the body.</p> <p>The disease is endemic in parts of Africa, where people have become infected through bites from rodents or small animals. The monkeypox virus does not usually spread easily among people.</p> <p>Cases began emerging in Europe and the United States in May. Many of the individuals who contracted the virus had traveled internationally.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/07 EU warns dire climate change season ahead
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/climate-wildfires-fires-italy-natural-disasters-dd0c50d724cdc545dc1002ad3de25351
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union’s executive warned on Thursday that the continent is facing one of its toughest years when it comes to natural disasters like droughts and wildfires because of increasing climate change.</p> <p>With extremely dry weather hitting several Mediterranean nations, EU Commissioner Maroš Šefčovič told legislators on Thursday that “the present drought in Europe could become the worst ever.” Fires ravaging huge swaths of countryside only exacerbate the climate crisis, he said.</p> <p>“Statistics show that since 2017, we have the most intense, intense forest fires ever seen in Europe. And that we unfortunately expect the 2022 forest fire season could follow this trend,” he said.</p> <p>Extended drought conditions have hit several member states like Greece and Italy and a heat wave last month went as far up as northern Germany. It heightened concerns across Europe for more disasters for the rest of the summer.</p> <p>Šefčovič said the EU is already funding the deployment of over 200 firefighters from across the bloc to deal with fires in Greece.</p> <p>Italy is in the midst of an early summer heat wave, coupled with the worst drought in northern Italy in 70 years and the conditions were linked to the disaster last Sunday when a huge chunk of the Marmolada glacier cleaved off and crashed onto hikers.</p> <p>The death toll stands at nine, with five people who had been hiking there still unaccounted for.</p> <p>“The tragic event in Marmolada is just the latest example of disasters linked to warmer temperatures and thus to climate change,” Šefčovič said.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/07 Russia ‘operational pause’ in Ukraine
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-government-and-politics-22a6a809761fd4a6404750a9b5b2fbd1
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Foreign analysts say Russia may be temporarily easing its offensive in Ukraine as the Russian military attempts to reassemble its forces for a renewed assault.</p> <p>On Wednesday, Russian forces made no claimed or assessed territorial gains in Ukraine “for the first time in 133 days of war,” according to the Institute for the Study of War. The think tank based in Washington suggested that Moscow may be taking an “operational pause,” but that it does not entail “the complete cessation of active hostilities.”</p> <p>“Russian forces will likely confine themselves to relatively small-scale offensive actions as they attempt to set conditions for more significant offensive operations and rebuild the combat power needed to attempt those more ambitious undertakings,” the institute said.</p> <p>A Thursday statement from Russia’s Defense Ministry seemed to confirm that assessment. It said Russian military units involved in combat in Ukraine had been given time to rest.</p> <p>“The units that performed combat missions during the special military operation are taking measures to recover their combat capabilities. The servicemen are given the opportunity to rest, receive letters and parcels from home,” read the statement, quoted by Russian state news agency Tass.</p> <p>Shelling continued in Ukraine’s east, where at least nine civilians were killed and six wounded in 24 hours, Ukrainian officials said.</p>

Ukraine's presidential office said in its Thursday morning update that cities and villages in seven Ukrainian regions were shelled in the past day. Most of the civilian deaths occurred in Donetsk province, where fighting is ongoing. Seven civilians were killed there, including a child, the presidential office said.

Ten cities and villages came under shelling in Donetsk, and 35 buildings were destroyed, including a school, a vocational college and a hospital, officials said.

Donetsk is part of the Donbas, a mostly Russian-speaking industrial region where Ukraine's most experienced soldiers are concentrated. Pro-Russian separatists have fought Ukrainian forces and controlled much of the Donbas for eight years. Russian President Vladimir Putin recognized the independence of two self-proclaimed republics there just before Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24.

Putin on Monday claimed victory in Luhansk, the other province constituting the Donbas, after Ukrainian forces withdrew from the last city they controlled there. The governor of Luhansk, Serhiy Haidai, denied Wednesday that the Russians had completely captured the province.

In Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, a boarding school was hit, but no one was injured. The Kharkiv region, which lies along the border with Russia, is under daily shelling, and two civilians were killed there over the past 24 hours.

The Ukrainian military said Thursday that Russian forces also carried out shelling and helicopter strikes in the Sumy region in the northeast.

Even as the fighting continued, the British Defense Ministry said it thinks Russia's military is "reconstituting" its forces. A ministry intelligence assessment issued Thursday said the heavy shelling along the front line in Donetsk is likely intended to secure previous Russian gains.

Further hostilities were reported in the Black Sea where the Ukrainian military said Thursday that a Ukrainian flag had been planted on a strategic island that Russian troops withdrew from last month.

Ukraine's Operational Command South said in a statement that Ukrainian military units had cleared Snake Island, an outpost off Ukraine's southwestern coast vital for guaranteeing sea lanes out of the key port of Odesa. The command group also said the Ukrainian military had destroyed some 30 pieces of Russian military equipment, describing the discovery of "abandoned ammunition and vast ruins."

Russian troops withdrew from the island on June 30 in what Russia's Defense Ministry called "a goodwill gesture." But the ministry said Thursday that a Russian Aerospace Forces aircraft had launched a missile strike on the island as Ukrainian forces attempted to plant the flag.

"As a result, some of the Ukrainian military personnel were destroyed, the rest fled," the ministry said.

Ukraine also said that Russia fired two missiles targeting a Moldovan-flagged oil tanker in the Black Sea, setting it ablaze.

Ukraine's southern military command said the strike hit the Millennium Spirit, which has over 500 tons of diesel fuel on board. Ukraine says one missile struck the ship, while the other went wide. Social media images showed smoke rising off the coast of Odesa on Thursday morning.

The ship has been without a crew, drifting at sea since the start of the war in February. Russia did not immediately acknowledge the strike on the vessel. The ship's tracking devices have been down since it was abandoned by its crew.

Ukraine's Foreign Ministry said it summoned the Turkish ambassador in Kyiv Thursday over what it described as the theft of Ukrainian grain by a Russian ship.

	<p>The Russian ship Zhibek Zholy was allowed to leave Turkey's Black Sea coast after Turkish authorities briefly detained it at Ukraine's request. Ukraine summoned the ambassador to complain about the "unacceptable situation."</p> <p>Turkey, with its Bosphorus Strait, is a key transit route for shipping out of the Black Sea. Ukraine has sought to pressure Ankara to stop Russian shipments of its grain, a vital source of revenue.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/07 Secret Putin telephone call leaked
SOURCE	https://www.news.com.au/world/europe/russia-responds-after-vladimir-putin-call-with-emmanuel-macron-leaked/news-story/fae311ba4a435991da05e4a65744fd14
GIST	<p>Russian authorities are scrambling after a top secret call between Vladimir Putin and French leader Emmanuel Macron was leaked.</p> <p>Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Wednesday that the publication of the call, in which the two presidents opened fire in a barrage of words, was a breach of "diplomatic etiquette".</p> <p>"Diplomatic etiquette does not provide for unilateral leaks of (such) recordings," Lavrov said on a trip to Vietnam.</p> <p>The details of the confidential call days before Moscow's military operation in Ukraine were revealed by the broadcaster France 2 in a documentary on the French president's handling of the conflict.</p> <p>The call is said to have taken place on February 20.</p> <p>The French president reportedly blew up at Putin over suggestions France should negotiate with pro-Russian separatists residing in Ukraine.</p> <p>"I don't know where your lawyers learned the law!" Macron reportedly told Putin. "It is not separatists who are going to make proposals on Ukrainian laws."</p> <p>"Of course, we have a completely different reading of the situation," Putin replied.</p> <p>"I don't know what jurist will be able to tell you that in a sovereign country, the texts of laws are proposed by separatist groups and not by the democratically elected authorities," Macron replied.</p> <p>Putin, now enraged, shot back: "This is not a democratically elected government. They came to power in a coup, there were people burned alive, it was a bloodbath and Zelensky is one of those responsible."</p> <p>The day after the call, Russia recognised the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic.</p> <p>Three days after that, Russia invaded Ukraine.</p> <p>In the call, Macron also calls for both sides to "calm down" and suggest Putin pencil in a meeting with US President Joe Biden or at least release a press release saying they would hold talks.</p> <p>But Putin extraordinarily dismissed Macron, telling him he is going to the gym.</p> <p>"To be honest with you, I wanted to go play ice hockey because here I'm talking to you from the gym before starting physical exercises. I'll call my advisors first," Putin says.</p> <p>Lavrov said Russia had nothing to be ashamed of from the content of the conversation between the two leaders.</p>

	<p>“We in principle lead negotiations in such a way that we never have anything to be ashamed of. We always say what we think and are ready to answer for these words and explain our position,” he said.</p> <p>Lavrov is on a two-day visit to Vietnam, on the tenth anniversary of the two nations’ “comprehensive strategic partnership”.</p> <p>Vietnam, historically close to Moscow, has so far declined to outright condemn Russia’s military intervention in Ukraine.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/07 Ukraine: Western weapons begin to help
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-says-western-weapons-begin-to-help-as-it-raises-flag-on-snake-island-11657190686
GIST	<p>Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky said that Western heavy weapons are starting to have an effect on the battlefield but urged speedier deliveries, particularly of anti-aircraft systems, as Russia continued lobbing missiles into Ukrainian cities.</p> <p>While heavy fighting continued in the eastern Donbas region, Ukrainian troops disembarked on the contested Snake Island in the Black Sea and planted a Ukrainian flag on it for the first time since Russia seized the island in February, according to footage posted Thursday by Kyiv.</p> <p>Russian forces withdrew from Snake Island last week, after coming under long-range missile and artillery barrages that were enabled by Western military supplies. The island controls shipping lanes in the Black Sea that Ukraine hopes to reopen to export its agricultural goods.</p> <p>It wasn’t clear whether any Ukrainian personnel remained on the tiny island after reclaiming it. Two Russian missiles struck Snake Island’s landing pier Thursday, according to the Ukrainian regional administration. Russia’s Defense Ministry said its aircraft killed some of the Ukrainian troops on the island while the rest fled to the mainland near Odessa. There was no independent confirmation of the Russian claim.</p> <p>The U.S. and allies have sent close to 200 NATO-standard 155 mm howitzers to Ukraine in the past two months, helping offset Russia’s huge firepower advantage, and have started delivering Himars multiple-launch rocket systems that Kyiv in recent days successfully used to strike weapons depots and fuel-storage facilities across Russian-held parts of Donbas.</p> <p>“We finally feel that the Western artillery that we received from our partners is working very powerfully. Its precision really is at the level that we need,” Mr. Zelensky said in a late Wednesday address. “Our defenders carry out painful strikes against warehouses and other important logistic nodes of the occupiers. And this materially lowers the offensive potential of the Russian army.”</p> <p>Ukraine, however, has yet to receive sophisticated air-defense systems that it says could protect its cities from Russian missile strikes.</p> <p>Germany earlier this year promised a citywide Iris-T air-defense system, and the U.S. in its latest aid announcement said it would provide two Nasams air-defense systems. Unlike most other heavy weapons supplied by the U.S., the Nasams won’t be drawn down from existing U.S. military stocks but will have to be purchased from the manufacturer, a process that the Pentagon said could take months.</p> <p>“Regardless of how the war develops on the battlefield, the priority is the defense of the skies,” Mr. Zelensky said. “We count on the arrival in Ukraine of powerful air-defense systems. This is important because it would allow women and children to return home.”</p> <p>Millions of Ukrainians, mostly women and children, fled the country after Russia invaded in February, and most of them remain abroad because even cities far away from the front lines, such as Kyiv, Odessa and</p>

Lviv, are regularly hit by Russian missiles that kill civilians. Some 22 people died in [a Russian missile strike that hit a shopping mall](#) in the central city of Kremenchuk last week.

While Ukraine uses a combination Soviet-designed air-defense systems such as the S-300 and Western-provided tactical anti-aircraft missiles such as Stingers to keep Russian warplanes from operating deep inside Ukrainian airspace, it is able to shoot down only a part of the long-range cruise missiles that Russia is firing from several hundred miles away.

One of these missiles struck a grains warehouse near Odessa overnight, according to the local administration. In the northeastern city of Kharkiv, a Russian missile strike Wednesday destroyed a university campus.

Near Odessa, a Russian air-to-surface missile Thursday hit an abandoned Moldovan-flagged tanker, Millennial Spirit, in the open sea, the Ukrainian military said. The tanker, which had a small amount of diesel on board, caught fire.

In Donbas, Russian forces continued an assault on Ukrainian defenses near the towns of Slovyansk, Siversk and Bakhmut after consolidating control over the city of Lysychansk, [captured last week](#), according to the Ukrainian military. Ukrainian HIMARS strikes on Russian ammunition depots in the region sought to undermine that offensive. In Ukrainian-controlled parts of the Donetsk region, which together with the Luhansk region makes up Donbas, seven civilians were killed by Russian shelling in the past 24 hours, according to governor Pavlo Kyrylenko.

While Russia continues to attack Ukrainian positions, it has not announced new territory gains since July 3, when it seized Lysychansk and completed its takeover of the Luhansk region.

The subsequent lack of movement suggests that Russian forces are taking an operational pause, confining troops to relatively small-scale offensive actions, according to a Wednesday evening assessment by the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War. Russia, which [has lost significant manpower and weaponry](#) during the Donbas offensive, is likely rebuilding combat power to attempt future assaults, ISW said.

The Russian invasion has triggered a campaign throughout Ukraine to remove references to Russia, such as streets named after Moscow or Russian writers and politicians. In the central Ukrainian town of Pereyaslav, where Ukrainian Cossack leader Bohdan Khmelnytsky pledged allegiance to the Russian czar in 1654, municipal officials Thursday removed a monumental sculpture that commemorated the “eternal” union between Russia and Ukraine.

Even before the removal, the monument’s pedestal was spray-painted with the names of Ukrainian cities where large numbers of civilians died as a result of the Russian invasion: Bucha, Mariupol, Irpin, Kharkiv and Hostomel.

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HEADLINE	07/06 Budget crises at rural WA hospitals?
SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/news/2022/07/pandemic-relief-funds-may-mask-budget-crises-rural-wa-hospitals
GIST	<p>At the beginning of the pandemic, administrators at tiny Summit Pacific Medical Center in Elma, Grays Harbor County, thought they had a good plan to manage COVID-19 patients. They would send patients about 30 minutes east to Providence St. Peter Hospital in Olympia in exchange for taking non-COVID-19 admissions.</p> <p>Such transfers are routine for Summit Pacific. Its staff frequently stabilizes patients before transporting them to a higher level of care at another hospital.</p>

But the plan didn't work. As the first wave of infections maxed out Providence St. Peter around May 2020, Summit Pacific redeployed staff to its emergency department. At one point 80% of patients needed COVID-19 care and three people were on ventilators. The hospital had to start admitting them.

It sometimes had 20 emergency department patients, forcing it to cut inpatient beds from 10 to five, Summit Pacific officials said. Staff from other units and high-level administrators with medical licenses stepped in to care for patients. They converted conference rooms to clinic space and, later, vaccine stations.

Summit Pacific CEO Josh Martin said the hospital gratefully received \$4.7 million in [CARES Act Provider Relief Funds](#) in 2020. Together with a \$4.6 million Paycheck Protection Program loan, those dollars "saved" the hospital, he said, allowing it to cover payroll and keep everyone on staff.

Many small, rural medical centers classified as "[critical access hospitals](#)" struggled with [financial sustainability long before the pandemic](#). In some cases, federal relief money offered the only hope of continuing care and may have [masked](#) financial losses amid increased costs and volatile income. Despite millions of dollars in federal support, a recent report estimated [14 Washington hospitals remain at risk of closing](#) in the next six years.

In Washington state, many of these rural hospitals are also public hospitals that undergo routine [audits](#) published by the state. But private systems can be far less transparent with how they distribute federal dollars across complex organizational structures, making it hard to account for how much money gets to the local level.

And, as COVID-19 lingers, hospitals continue to struggle to hire enough staff, keep up with inflated operational costs and care for patients who show up sicker after putting off medical appointments the past two-plus years.

"COVID's still here," Martin said, "and we're still in crisis in many ways."

Rural care at risk

The future of some of Washington's rural hospitals remains precarious, according to Jacqueline Barton-True, vice president of advocacy and rural health at the Washington State Hospital Association. She said the pandemic has posed "multiple, unfolding challenges at once," and it's not over.

At the most basic level, these hospitals provide access to emergency departments for rural Washingtonians, who otherwise might have to travel more than 30 minutes to get life-saving care. But they also tend to treat older, sicker patients and higher shares of Medicaid or Medicare patients, who draw lower reimbursements that may not cover the full costs of care. Some also provide expensive hospice and ambulance services over large geographic areas.

"Rural health care is just a challenge to make work financially, fundamentally," Barton-True said.

While these facilities offer important services, she said, they don't have the steady volume of patients that the U.S. health care payment system relies on. Federal Provider Relief Funds proved "vital" to keeping many of them open these past two years.

Cascade Medical Center in Leavenworth is also a small, [critical access hospital](#) with a regional plan in place to send COVID-19 admissions to the much larger Central Washington Hospital in Wenatchee. In this case, the plan worked and Cascade Medical had not admitted any COVID-19 patients through May of this year.

But CEO Diane Blake said Cascade Medical has still needed state and federal relief. She described a \$2.2 million Paycheck Protection Program loan as "really essential for us because it was a way to keep going." It helped avoid staff furloughs in the earliest days of the pandemic, despite closing some specialty services and moving other care to telehealth.

With the \$4.3 million Cascade Medical received in Provider Relief Funds, Blake said the hospital bought more beds and defibrillators, improved the HVAC system for infection control, replaced the lab refrigerator for vaccine storage and sponsored vaccine clinics.

“The federal dollars helped us stay open and prepare a little bit for the future,” she said. “We were able to replace some items that made sense from the pandemic perspective, but will also mean we don’t have to replace that two years from now.”

However, Blake worries that the much-needed federal relief might be masking a “crisis in the making.” Capped reimbursements, staffing shortages and rising costs for care continue to squeeze rural health facilities.

“We still have a problem in rural health care of the payments,” she said. “And the way payment methodologies are set up ... they don’t necessarily sustain care.”

Like Summit Pacific, Cascade Medical is a public entity — Chelan County Public Hospital District No. 1 — with open commissioner meetings and financial reports. Public hospitals must comply with transparency rules that most private providers do not, leaving gaps in comparing how facilities have invested their relief money.

And similar to many small, rural entities receiving significant federal funding for the first time, Blake said, Cascade Medical is also preparing for its first “[single audit](#)” — a challenging effort for its shorthanded finance department.

Disparities in transparency

More than 20 miles down Highway 2 at Central Washington Hospital, nurse Paul Fuller said he has watched fellow health care workers leave “in droves” amid [intense schedules, heavy patient loads and mounting burnout](#). Some took attractive travel nurse contracts that offered significantly higher pay. Others felt stretched thin by staff turnover or left in the dark about how hospital administrators planned to address the crisis.

“Hospitals as a whole need more transparency, across the board,” he said. “Because it is a teamwork job. ... Staff should be able to know what’s going on.”

If the hospital would have told staff where the pandemic relief money was going, any restrictions on it, and why there wasn’t enough to give them hazard pay or retention bonuses early on, Fuller said, it would have made him feel a lot more respected. He said he thinks it also would have prevented some of his co-workers from leaving.

The reporting requirements on federal relief, such as [Provider Relief Funds](#), may appear robust, despite delays on [plans](#) for post-payment review or audits. The reporting can be time-consuming and detailed, according to administrators such as Blake. But private hospitals are not required to share any of that with their employees or the broader community.

Central Washington Hospital is owned by a private nonprofit, Confluence Health. A spokesperson declined to confirm the amounts the hospital received in federal pandemic relief, how it used the money or details of its current financial stability. Confluence’s audited financial statements are not public record, and its [IRS tax filing \(Form 990\)](#) has not been posted for 2020.

In its [2021 Community Report](#), Confluence writes that CARES Act money helped it “maintain a positive operating margin.” According to [federal data](#), Confluence’s two hospitals and perhaps other related entities received \$34.7 million in Provider Relief Funds.

Multistate systems PeaceHealth and Providence St. Joseph Health both agreed to share some information with Crosscut about the pandemic relief attributed specifically to some of their hospitals in Washington

state. Otherwise, federal awards to large hospital systems often obscure what dollars make it down to local hospitals.

For example, Crosscut estimated that Providence St. Mary Medical Center in Walla Walla received \$5.5 million in Provider Relief Funds listed under two iterations of the name Providence Health & Services — Washington, in Walla Walla. But Providence’s spokesperson confirmed it received \$15.6 million.

In response to these reporting gaps, health care unions and other advocates pushed for hospitals to report not just to the government, but also to their communities about their usage of federal relief dollars and other activities during the pandemic.

“More transparency is always better,” said Ruth Schubert, a spokesperson for the Washington State Nurses Association, which represents staff at Central Washington Hospital.

In Washington state, a 2021 law ([House Bill 1272](#)) will soon require hospitals to report to the state Department of Health more detail on expenses and revenues, emergency grants and loans (such as during the current pandemic), patient demographics, charity care and more.

Similarly, [Community Catalyst](#), a national nonprofit focused on health equity, sent a [letter](#) to U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra in August, requesting greater accountability and transparency of federal pandemic relief funds.

And, it argued, grants to health care providers should be conditioned on those providers taking “concrete steps to address health inequities.” Those steps could include suspending medical debt collection activities during and for at least one year after the end of the public health emergency.

Mark Rukavina, program director at Community Catalyst, said no new restrictions have yet been imposed, but his organization continues to advocate for tighter rules on future relief dollars.

“We’d like to see clear conditions put on that funding,” he said, “so that it’s a benefit both to those hospitals or health care providers, as well as to the patients served by those providers.”

Ongoing challenges

Critics of the early rounds of Provider Relief Funds argue that the program [disadvantaged rural hospitals or small providers](#) while giving money to systems with large cash reserves that could weather the tumult without help. Some of those systems [bought up](#) other providers, as places like Cascade Medical and Summit Pacific had to suspend specialty care. System administrators [disputed those alleged disparities](#), contending that all hospitals faced historic challenges.

Barton-True of the Washington State Hospital Association said rural hospital leaders continue to voice uncertainty about when or if they will get back to pre-pandemic operations.

“It’s a lot of communities, a lot of hospitals trying to hang on, doing their best in responding to events as they can,” she said. “But looking forward right now is really challenging.”

Industry reports show inflation has hit hospitals hard in pharmaceuticals and other supplies, with an average overall expense increase of [20%](#) from 2019 to 2021. Hospitals cannot just raise prices in response to inflation, as a private business might. They negotiate payment rates with insurance companies and take what the government pays in Medicare and Medicaid rates.

While the hospitals are absorbing costs right now, [eventually patients will](#), in the form of higher premiums and out-of-pocket expenses.

Summit Pacific in Elma and other rural hospitals have closed some specialty services, forcing patients to delay care or travel farther for appointments. Officials at Summit Pacific and Cascade Medical both described delayed care or screenings that have resulted in seeing more patients with more severe needs.

	<p>The Washington State Nurses Association has also advocated for hospitals to pay more to hire and retain current staff, as a way to save money on expensive travel nurses. Schubert said it feels as though some rural hospitals are recognizing this in recent negotiations with the union and started offering some retention bonuses and wage increases.</p> <p>While Summit Pacific has paid employees \$320,000 in “retention incentives” over the past two years, CEO Martin said rural hospitals “cannot win” on wages or bonuses relative to larger, big-city hospitals, nor the temporary staffing agencies</p> <p>The Washington State Hospital Association is still lobbying for federal financial assistance, such as more Provider Relief Funds to cover the months including the delta and omicron surges. But those funds appear to be dried up, while the hospitals and communities still face COVID-19, sicker patients and high inflation.</p> <p>“The challenge is that we're really struggling to convince people that this is still happening for us, that hospitals are still very much in the midst of COVID and will be for some time,” Barton-True said. “And we're probably going to be the last to be able to be done with COVID, if we ever are.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/07 Day 134 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/07/russia-ukraine-war-update-what-we-know-on-day-134-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russia’s defence ministry has said it killed Ukrainian servicemen who were trying to raise Ukraine’s flag on the recently retaken Snake Island. The daily operational briefing from Russia’s military states: “Around 5am several Ukrainian servicemen landed on the island from a motorboat and took pictures with the flag. The aircraft of the Russian Aerospace Forces immediately launched a strike with high-precision missiles on Zmiinyi Island, as a result of which part of the Ukrainian military personnel was destroyed.” • Authorities in Odesa appeared to confirm that missiles had struck the island, and that Russians had also destroyed tow grain hangars in the region which contained “about 35 tonnes of grain”. • The capture of the city of Lysychansk in eastern Ukraine has given Russia’s forces “genuine headway”, while its forces in the south have shown signs of “better cooperation”, analysts say. Western officials said the sustainability of Russia’s attacks on Ukraine was “challenging”, but described the impact on their munitions and morale as “remarkable”. • Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, has said heavy weapons from western allies have finally begun working at “full capacity” on frontlines. In his nightly video address, Zelenskiy said the Ukrainian military has been able to target Russian warehouses and locations that are “important for logistics”. • Resistance remains ongoing in villages around Lysychansk, where 15,000 civilians remain, according to Luhansk’s governor, Serhiy Haidai. On Telegram, Haidai said: “Today’s videos from Lysychansk are painful to watch.” He accused Putin’s troops of engaging in a scorched earth policy, “burning down and destroying everything on their way”. • The evacuation of civilians from Sloviansk continued on Wednesday as Russian troops pressed towards the eastern Ukrainian city in their campaign to control the Donbas region. Mayor Vadym Lyakh said that about 23,000 people out of 110,000 were still in Sloviansk but claimed Russia had been unable to surround the city. The governor of Donetsk has also urged the region’s 350,000 people to flee. • The battle for Sloviansk is likely to be the next key contest in the struggle for Donbas as Russian forces approach to within 16km of the Donetsk town, British intelligence said. Russian forces from the eastern and western groups of forces are likely now around 16km north of Sloviansk as central and southern groups of forces also pose a threat to the town, the UK Ministry of Defence has said.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ukraine has rejected the claim that Russian forces destroyed two advanced US-made Himars rocket systems and their ammunition depots in eastern Ukraine. Ukraine's general staff said the claims by Russia's defence ministry were fake and that it was using the US-supplied Himars to inflict "devastating blows" on Russian forces. • Ukraine's foreign ministry said Thursday a Russian ship carrying Ukrainian grain had been allowed to leave the Turkish port of Karasu, calling it an "unacceptable situation and summoning Turkey's ambassador. "We regret that Russia's ship Zhibek Zholy, which was full of stolen Ukrainian grain, was allowed to leave Karasu port despite criminal evidence presented to the Turkish authorities," foreign ministry spokesperson Oleg Nikolenko. • Russia's RIA Novosti news agency reports that the British embassy in Moscow has said it will not be using its new address of Lugansk People's Republic. Moscow mayor, Sergei Sobyenin, signed a decree on 5 July to give an unnamed stretch of territory located along the Smolenskaya embankment the new name. The US embassy in Moscow now similarly finds itself located in Donetsk People's Republic Square. • Finland's parliament has voted in favour of legislation that would allow barriers on the country's border with Russia. The bill on preparedness was passed by a supermajority that allows parliament to fast-track laws, amid fears Russia could retaliate over Finland's plans to join the Nato military alliance. The law also has implications for asylum seekers to Finland as it will allow the government to build fences or other barriers near Finnish borders and direct all asylum applications to one or several border crossings, such as an airport. • Ireland's taoiseach, Micheál Martin, visited the war-scarred suburbs of Borodianka, Bucha and Irpin on the outskirts of Kyiv on Wednesday. Martin said he and Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, discussed a joint response to the threat to food security, the energy crisis and the preparation of the seventh sanction package against Russia. Martin reiterated his country's solidarity with Ukraine. • Russian forces have occupied about 22% of Ukraine's arable land, according to Nasa's Harvest mission. Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Nasa has been focusing on the impact of the war on the global food system. Its findings have revealed that Ukrainian fields where 28% of winter and 18% of spring crops are sown are under Russian occupation. • Sri Lanka's president, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, said he asked his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin to help import fuel to his country as it faces its worst economic crisis in seven decades. Rajapaksa tweeted that he had a "productive" telephone call with Putin, while thanking him for "all the support extended by his [government] to overcome the challenges of the past". • Zelenskiy called on the world's largest independent oil trader to stop shipping Russian oil, accusing it of "brazen profiteering from blood oil". • Ukraine's military announced plans to introduce a system of permits that would prohibit men eligible for conscription from leaving the region where they are registered. The move, based on legislation from 1992, was intended to enable the country's armed forces to locate potential conscripts more easily, but it prompted an immediate backlash. • Nearly 9 million people have left Ukraine since Russia invaded, the UN refugee agency has said. With Russia stepping up its offensive in the east of the country, there are increasingly loud calls from Ukrainian authorities for people to escape while they can from frontline areas.
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HEADLINE	07/06 Latvia reinstates compulsory military duty
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/06/latvia-to-reinstate-compulsory-military-service-as-russia-tensions-rise
GIST	<p>Latvia is to reinstate compulsory military service amid growing tension with Russia in the wake of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>"The current military system of Latvia has reached its limit. Meanwhile, we have no reason to think that Russia will change its behaviour," the Latvian defence minister, Artis Pabriks, told reporters on Tuesday.</p>

	<p>Latvia had scrapped mandatory service a few years after joining the Nato military alliance. Since 2007, the EU member's military has consisted of career soldiers along with national guard volunteers who serve in the infantry part-time at weekends.</p> <p>The country of fewer than 2 million people, which borders Belarus and Russia, has only 7,500 active-duty soldiers and national guard members, backed by 1,500 Nato troops.</p> <p>Pabriks said the mandatory military service requirement would apply only to men and would come into effect next year, with several options available.</p> <p>Gatis Priede, a national guard soldier, called the move "the best news" and said the decision should have been taken after Russia annexed Crimea in 2014. "This is the right thing – to train more reservists for our army and for overall Nato strength, which is still critically lacking in the northern European and Baltic region," he said.</p> <p>Pabriks also announced plans to build another military base near the south-eastern city of Jēkabpils, located closer to the Russian border than its existing base at Ādaži.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/06 NIFC: US facing a summer of big blazes
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jul/06/us-west-wildfire-summer
GIST	<p>Following an explosive spring that unleashed major wildfires from the US southwest to Alaska, the west is now bracing for a summer of big blazes as the parched landscapes risk turning into tinderboxes.</p> <p>Fire activity is expected to increase in several US states over the coming months, according to a newly released outlook from the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC), with parts of the Pacific north-west, northern California, Texas, Hawaii and Alaska forecast to be among those hardest hit by fire conditions in the months ahead.</p> <p>The severity of the emergency will depend on four key factors: drought, dried fuels, windy or warm weather, and of course, ignitions. But the climate crisis and human-caused warming has turned up the dial on risk-factors with more intense conditions and a greater frequency with which these conditions align.</p> <p>"No matter which way you slice it, it is going to be bad," said Jim Wollmann, a meteorologist at the NIFC.</p> <p>Here's what you need to know:</p> <p>An early start to the season</p> <p>Already, the amount of acreage burned by this point in the year has eclipsed previous years, standing at roughly 220% higher than the 10-year average. In New Mexico in April, a blaze that started as a controlled burn escaped containment before it spread quickly and burned for months, consuming large swaths of land and hundreds of homes and other buildings. In Alaska, fires sparked by lightning strikes and fueled by unusually hot and dry conditions have torched more than 2m acres in recent weeks, a first for the state this early in the season.</p> <p>The early escalation has put more pressure on strained first responders, consumed more resources earlier in the year, and has shortened the window when preventive treatments like prescribed burning can be performed. Climate crisis is a key culprit, causing a shift in conditions that officials say also contributed to the controlled burn going awry.</p> <p>A landscape set to burn</p>

With the hottest months ahead for most of the west, these stresses may only be the beginning – the desiccated landscapes are primed to burn. Decades of fire suppression has left ample vegetation to burn, while [timber harvesting that targets the oldest trees](#) has impacted resiliency in forests.

Meanwhile, even after the record rains that flooded parts of Yellowstone and south-central Montana, [more than 75% of the west is in drought](#), with exceptional drought conditions plaguing areas including most of California, the Great Basin and Texas.

While drought is natural in the west, with periods of dryness interspersed with wet ones being part of the region's climate going back thousands of years, a strong warming trend is exacerbating the problem, said Dr Tim Brown, the director of the Western Regional Climate Center at the [Drought](#) Research Institute.

Hot droughts, as they are called by climate scientists, are particularly problematic – especially when it comes to fire risks. Heat alone enhances ignition potential, but when combined with drought it “is a major feedback process”, Brown said. Rising temperatures bake moisture out of the landscapes and out of the environment. “If it's hotter it is drier and the fuels become more flammable.”

Already, scientists are seeing peak levels of dryness in plants. In mid-June, California fire officials said vegetation [was as dry in June as it typically is in October](#), when summer and autumn heat has had time to bake out more moisture.

“It is dire across the board,” said Dr Craig Clements, the director of the Wildfire Interdisciplinary Research Center at San Jose State University about drying [California](#) landscapes. “We have a lot of accumulation of dead fuels and because of drought it is just going to get worse and worse. We can only expect as we get later in the summer, that the fires will get bigger.”

Increasing fire intensity

Along with an increased risk of ignition, the intense conditions also make fires that do start spread more quickly. “We are witnessing wildfire behavior, fueled by severe drought and high winds that now characterize the summer months, that has never been encountered before,” a spokesperson for the United States Forest Service said.

CalFire battalion chief Jon Heggie called the conditions a “recipe for disaster”.

“The fire behavior we are seeing is not like what we started with in our careers”, he said.

Along with increasing heat and deepening drought, temperatures in the west now linger at the highs longer into the night. Fires that once calmed after the sun went down now often rage without reprieve, offering limited opportunity for containment. “Fires are burning actively through the night, which is not something I saw in the first two-thirds of my career,” Heggie said.

“What's concerning is that typical indicators for extreme fire behavior, like strong winds or low relative humidity combined aren't necessary anymore” said Wollmann, the NIFC meteorologist. “Even with normal, typical afternoon winds we are seeing rapid rates of [fire] spread.”

An exhausted firefighting force

Facing a longer firefighting season layered with more difficult battles, firefighters across the US west are feeling the strain.

“The grind just never stops,” said Kelly Martin, the president of Grassroots Wildland Firefighters, a firefighter non-profit advocacy group. Crews who have been fighting the fires across the southwest are only just starting what will be a long and hard season, she said: “The incredible toll that it takes physically and mentally is excruciating and cumulative on wildland firefighters like we have never seen before. People are burned out. The pay is oppressive and the conditions are extraordinary.”

Wildland firefighters have carried the burden, and it has exacted a devastating toll, [with high rates of suicide, substance abuse and divorce](#). Low-pay and poor working conditions [have caused many to resign](#), especially at the federal level where salaries are the lowest. [That's left holes in crewing](#) preventative treatments and on the biggest blazes.

Going into another dangerous summer, the Biden administration announced that funds from the infrastructure bill would provide a temporary fix, granting federal firefighters a temporary raise. The money – the lesser of either a \$20,000 increase or a 50% base-pay bump – applies retroactively to last October and is already hitting paychecks. Biden vowed to continue working for long-term funding “to make sure these heroes keep earning the paychecks – and dignity – they deserve”, he said in a statement.

But some feel that this move, while a positive shift, is too little and too late. “Everyone knows federal firefighters are underpaid,” said a federal firefighter who asked to remain anonymous for fear of retribution for speaking out. “But fires have also changed dramatically. “We are going to crazier fires with more values at risk, more homes at risk, more people’s lives at risk.”

And yet there is some good news

While the forecast paints a grim picture of the coming months, there is some good news. A spate of spring showers delayed the onset of the highest risk conditions in much of the northwest. “We are in a little bit of a better situation than we were a month ago,” Wollmann said, noting that the wet spring shortened the window for when the worst conditions might align and create hard-to-control conflagrations.

But, climate crisis has still raised the stakes. The rains were not intense enough to alleviate the drought and they also produced a new problem – spurring a growth in grasses that will brown under the summer heat.

More rain expected during the upcoming summer monsoon should also offer a reprieve for the besieged southwest and southern Great Basin. But in areas where a thorough wetting isn’t expected until winter, the stage is set for a high-risk summer. All that’s needed is a spark.

“We really want people to be fire-aware,” Wollmann said. “If you are in an area that is fire-prone – which is pretty much anywhere in the west – even if we forecast the potential above normal, that doesn’t mean fires aren’t going to happen.”

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HEADLINE	07/06 Pakistan: monsoon 77 deaths in 3 weeks
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/06/monsoon-causes-at-least-77-deaths-in-pakistan-in-past-three-weeks
GIST	<p>At least 77 people have died in rain-related incidents across Pakistan in the past three weeks, the country’s minister for climate change said on Wednesday.</p> <p>The monsoon rains have also damaged homes, roads, bridges and power stations, Sherry Rehman told a news conference in the capital, Islamabad, as storms continued to lash the country.</p> <p>Rehman said 39 of the 77 people died in Balochistan. TV footage showed vehicles being swept away by deluges in Balochistan.</p> <p>Heavy rain also lashed Islamabad and the eastern Punjab province. Pakistan’s president, Arif Alvi, expressed his grief at the loss of life.</p> <p>Streets and homes were flooded in Quetta, the capital of Balochistan province, the provincial disaster management agency said.</p>

	<p>Rehman said the recent rains in Pakistan were 87% heavier than the average downpour. She linked the new pattern to the changes in climate, saying Pakistan should be ready to face more flooding because the country's glaciers were melting at a faster pace. That was causing flash floods that had damaged infrastructure.</p> <p>Naseer Nasar, a spokesperson at the Balochistan disaster management agency, said at least 50 people had been injured in rain-related incidents in the province since June. He said rescuers were transporting people to safer places away from floods and rain-hit areas in Balochistan.</p> <p>Every year many cities in Pakistan struggle with the annual monsoon deluge, drawing criticism about poor government planning. The season runs from July to September and experts say rains are essential for irrigating crops and replenishing dams and other water reservoirs in Pakistan.</p> <p>Some of the areas in southern Pakistan have faced drought since earlier this year.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/07 Copper prices fall signal recession concern
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/coppers-slide-signals-mounting-recession-concern-11657162793?mod=hp_lead_pos10
GIST	<p>Copper prices have fallen to their lowest level in nearly two years, with investor concerns about an economic slowdown intensifying.</p> <p>The most actively traded copper futures contract finished Wednesday at \$3.408 a pound, its lowest settlement since November 2020. That has copper, used in everything from construction to electronics, on pace to decline for five consecutive weeks.</p> <p>Behind the fall is concern about slowing demand as the Federal Reserve raises interest rates and as China, a leading user of the metal, has a sluggish recovery from Covid-19 lockdowns. Copper, which is particularly sensitive to expectations for the world-wide industrial outlook, is sometimes called Dr. Copper because of its use as a gauge of economic health.</p> <p>Many investors have unwound bets on copper. Hedge funds and speculators have turned net-bearish, with more wagers on falling copper prices than on gains. That has pushed net positioning to its lowest levels in more than two years, according to Commodity Futures Trading Commission data tracking futures and options through the week ended June 28.</p> <p>Copper hit record highs earlier this year partly because of supply concern related to the war in Ukraine and sanctions on Russia, a metals producer. Copper has since retreated by about 30%. Rising recession fears have lately weighed on stocks, bonds and commodities. A jittery revival in China has led economists to be downbeat about its economy given a darkening global backdrop and the risk of further Covid-19 outbreaks.</p> <p>“We don’t anticipate base metals’—copper’s included—outlook to improve until we see a change in Chinese demand,” said Darwei Kung, head of commodities and portfolio manager at DWS Group, an asset-management firm.</p> <p>Analysts expect copper to extend declines to finish the year. The Fed has been hiking interest rates at the most aggressive pace since the 1980s to tame inflation, and the lingering impact of lockdowns and travel restrictions in China is adding to the economic woes. China, the world’s largest commodity buyer, accounts for roughly half of global copper consumption.</p> <p>Some signs suggest the economy is already cooling. S&P Global’s U.S. composite purchasing managers index, which measures activity in both the manufacturing and services sectors, declined in June to its lowest reading in five months, reflecting slower growth. A measure of U.S. home-builder confidence fell</p>

in June for a sixth straight month, a potential sign of decreasing demand for the copper used in pipes, wiring and appliances.

Other base metals have reversed war-driven gains. The London Metal Exchange Index, which focuses on aluminum, copper, nickel, zinc, tin and lead, and the S&P GSCI Industrial Metals Index wrapped up the second quarter with the largest percentage declines since 2008.

Copper prices could rebound if the Fed slows rate increases and Chinese demand recovers. Mining companies, for their part, [could moderate investment in production](#), focusing instead on dividends and share buybacks.

Some analysts argue that copper hasn't always been a reliable recession indicator. Declines in copper presaged recessions in 1980 and 1989, but at other times the metal has fallen during expansions or climbed before recessions, according to a note by Nicholas Colas, co-founder of DataTrek Research.

While Zhiwei Ren, portfolio manager at Penn Mutual Asset Management, forecasts a recession in the next six to nine months, he said he thinks the transition to an economy less dependent on fossil fuels will lead to commodity gains in the future. He plans to buy the stock of mining companies. "Longer term, I'm very bullish on commodities," Mr. Ren said.

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HEADLINE	07/06 Extreme lightning sparks Alaska wildfires
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/07/06/wildfire-alaska-record-july-burned/
GIST	<p>An unusual spate of lightning has ignited more than 50 new wildfires in Alaska, worsening air quality, spurring communities to prepare to evacuate and exacerbating an already historic fire season in the state.</p> <p>More than 2.4 million acres have burned across the interior this year — among the most burned acres so early in the year in at least eight decades. As of Wednesday, more than 200 fires are actively burning across the state, straining firefighting resources.</p> <p>Wildfire smoke has worsened air quality over the central and eastern interior and the western Yukon territory. On Tuesday, communities in Anderson, Clear and Clear Space Force Station were advised to prepare a “go bag.” Predicted thunderstorms could bring lightning that could spark new wildfires.</p> <p>The Alaska Interagency Coordination Center (AICC) issued a Preparedness Level 5, the highest level, for the seventh day in a row Wednesday. The designation is assigned “when large fires that require incident management teams are occurring in several areas” and based on “burning conditions, the probability of new ignitions, the potential for extreme fire behavior, predicted weather, and resource availability.”</p> <p>Hot, dry conditions are fueling this year’s unprecedented activity. Snowpack was unusually sparse in the state’s southwest this winter, which was followed by a dry and warm spring. An ever-warming atmosphere, brought on by human-caused climate change, has also lengthened the growing season and increased the amount of trees and plants, which act as fuel.</p> <p>Then the lightning came, providing the necessary initial spark. An outbreak of thunderstorms in late May and early June brought lightning and ignited vegetation. Communities were evacuated, and dense smoke plumes appeared over Fairbanks.</p> <p>More than a million acres had burned by June 18, over a week earlier than any other season in the modern record.</p> <p>One of the wildfires that ignited in June, known as Upper Talarik, has burned a field camp associated with the Pebble Mine project, a controversial proposal to build a massive open-pit gold and copper mine above Bristol Bay, the world’s most prolific sockeye salmon fishery.</p>

Mike Heatwole, a spokesman for the Pebble Limited Partnership, said the fire burned a majority of the company's supply camp, located about 17 miles northwest of the community of Iliamna, around July 3. "It's important to note that we only have supplies at this camp and no staff," Heatwole said. "Thus, our field personnel were never in harm's way."

Joe Holzinger, a spokesman on the Lime Fire complex — an area that includes 18 separate fires that all started due to lightning, including the Upper Talarik, that have already burned a combined 782,000 acres — said Pebble Mine's representatives, along with firefighters, planned to visit the site and assess the damage on Thursday.

Environmentalists have long fought to stop the mine from being built and the Biden administration is considering banning such development in the area. Mary Catharine Martin, a spokeswoman for SalmonState, an environmental organization, described the Pebble project as "on political life support and now their liability has just increased."

"It's a mess on state land," she said.

This past weekend, another round of thunderstorms brought an exceptional siege of lightning, worsening the fire conditions. An unusual weather pattern over the North Pacific pumped moisture into the heart of Alaska beginning Friday, which allowed daily rounds of thunderstorms to develop over the mountains in the eastern portions of the state and northwest Yukon. As these storms crawled northwest through Alaska's interior, thousands of lightning strikes lit up the region.

On Saturday, there were more than 7,180 lightning strikes in Alaska and neighboring sections of Canada, per the Bureau of Land Management's Alaska Fire Service. An additional 10,500 lightning bolts struck the next day. The tally is among Alaska's highest two-day lightning totals in the past decade.

Thunderstorms are not uncommon in the Alaskan summer, but this degree of storminess is quite unusual.

Rick Thoman, a climate expert who works with the University of Alaska's International Arctic Research Center, acknowledges that historical counts of lightning strikes are hard to come by, but in his experience, "the amount of lightning over the weekend, with a two-day total of nearly 18,000 strikes in and near Alaska," was exceptional, the type of barrage that "likely only happens once every few summers."

Monday and Tuesday had seen an additional cumulative 10,195 strikes as of 10 p.m. Alaska time on Tuesday.

Forecasters think the unusually active lightning will worsen the fire situation for the state, leading to numerous ignitions that could each grow into large wildfires.

More than 50 wildfires have started since Sunday, and more will probably develop through the coming weekend as lightning continues and fires initially too small for detection expand.

The National Weather Service office in Fairbanks has issued a red-flag warning for fire weather across much of the state's interior. "Ample lightning," the warning advises — as many as "5000 lightning strokes a day" — "could lead to numerous new fire starts" through Friday.

Wildfires are common in the 49th state. Sparked by lightning and human activity, they rip through the extremely flammable black spruce forests that dot Alaskan permafrost between May and August. The average wildfire season between 1950 and 2019 in the state saw around 975,000 acres burn, according to data from the AICC.

	<p>Some years see almost no wildfire activity, while others feature a combination of atmospheric conditions for wildfire development and spread, such as dry conditions, frequent lightning-producing thunderstorms and hot spells.</p> <p>2022 is gearing up to be one of the more active years. Only one other year — 2015 — had seen more burned acres at this point in the season in the reliable record. Fires in 2015 went on to burn more than 5 million acres of Alaskan wildland.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/07 UN warns global ‘cost-of-living crisis’
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/07/07/ukraine-war-poverty-undp/
GIST	<p>Financial aftershocks from the war in Ukraine are hitting dozens of countries that are still reeling from the pandemic, fueling a global “cost-of-living crisis” that has driven 71 million people into poverty just since March, the U.N. Development Program said on Wednesday.</p> <p>Food and fuel price spikes resulting from Russia’s invasion have strained household and government budgets across the developing world, said Achim Steiner, administrator of the U.N. agency. Especially hard-hit have been the western Balkans, sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia.</p> <p>High prices for oil and wheat are hammering countries that borrowed heavily last year to fund pandemic relief, leaving little public money for measures that would take the sting out of rising costs, officials said in a new report.</p> <p>Many countries are resorting to broad energy subsidies that will be less effective at reducing poverty than programs targeted to help those suffering the most, the U.N. agency warned.</p> <p>With the Federal Reserve and other central banks raising interest rates to fight inflation, officials fear slowing economies could topple into a recession that would make the situation even worse. Global leaders must “stabilize a global economy that is facing multiple crises right now that are translating in just a matter of months into an enormous impact on people’s livelihoods, incomes and ability to feed their families,” Steiner said.</p> <p>The U.N. development agency is the latest international body to warn of the escalating costs of the Ukraine conflict. Last month, the World Bank lowered its growth forecast, warning that the global economy could be headed for a 1970s-style episode of rising prices and sluggish growth known as “stagflation.”</p> <p>Prices for energy and fuel spiked after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, with oil jumping more than 30 percent and wheat soaring by 70 percent. Both have retreated in recent weeks, though analysts at Capital Economics expect commodity prices to remain at elevated levels.</p> <p>“We expect higher prices to be with us for a long time,” said Caroline Bain, chief commodities economist for Capital Economics.</p> <p>Moves by several countries to ban crop exports as prices spiked have punished nations that depend upon imported food, such as Bangladesh, Lebanon and the Republic of Congo, two World Bank officials said in a blog post Wednesday.</p> <p>As of early June, 34 countries, including Russia, Kazakhstan and Turkey, had imposed restrictions on shipments of wheat and other agricultural commodities, said the post by Mari Elka Pangestu, the bank’s managing director of development policy, and Axel Van Trotsenburg, managing director of operations.</p> <p>Poverty, measured by the number of people surviving on less than \$3.20 per day, grew faster in the war’s first three months than it did during the first 18 months of the pandemic, according to George Gray Molina, the U.N. development agency’s chief economist.</p>

But the economic situation had been growing more dire even before the fighting started. Extreme weather events last year, including drought in Africa, pushed the cost of agricultural imports higher. And oil prices began rising in 2021 as demand revived during the global economic recovery from the pandemic.

The countries hardest-hit by the current inflationary spike — such as Uzbekistan, Sri Lanka and the Kyrgyz Republic — have few resources left to battle the latest calamity. Already burdened by high debt loads, they will need help from richer countries and multilateral organizations. Up to 80 countries “urgently” need debt relief, Steiner said.

But existing programs intended to ease debt service costs for poor countries have made little headway, leaving Steiner to reiterate earlier calls for world leaders to act.

The war-related effects are landing on governments that already face daunting challenges,, including mitigating the effects of climate change and reversing the educational losses suffered during the pandemic, the report said.

For now, policymakers in dozens of countries are focused on easing the financial burden for households struggling to afford more expensive food and fuel. Many governments are relying on blanket energy subsidies, which are easy to administer but wasteful. By making energy more affordable for rich and poor alike, they encourage consumption.

Cash payments targeted to lower-income individuals are more effective at blunting the growth in poverty. But they are harder to implement, requiring systems such as biometric screening and digital payment systems.

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HEADLINE	07/07 NKorea stops boasting on missile tests
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/07/07/north-korea-nuclear-missile-tests-covid/
GIST	<p>TOKYO — North Korea has tested an unprecedented number of missiles this year as it expands its weapons program. Until recently, it usually boasted about each test in state media — sometimes with dramatic flair.</p> <p>But since April, that information has dried up. North Korea has stopped sharing details, photos and videos of the half-dozen missile tests it has conducted since then, including that of a suspected intercontinental ballistic missile, as it develops long-range weapons that could reach the East Coast of the United States.</p> <p>It takes a constellation of information from various sources to try to piece together what may be going on with North Korea. Its hyperbolic weapons announcements are always taken with a grain of salt, and cross-checked with information provided by the United States, South Korea, Japan, commercial satellite imagery, weather data and other sources.</p> <p>But weapons analysts say it’s better than no information at all, especially when it comes to Pyongyang’s newest weaponry, as they gauge the regime’s progress in pursuing leader Kim Jong Un’s nuclear ambitions.</p> <p>“As analysts, we always look for more information, even if from state media, so there’s no question that the opacity in recent weeks has been detrimental,” said Ankit Panda, weapons analyst and a senior fellow in the Nuclear Policy Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.</p> <p>The prolonged lack of disclosure since April may reflect the country’s struggle with a coronavirus outbreak, which it recently said had begun that month, some experts say. On May 12, North Korea announced its first positive case, though there were reports of cases near the North Korea-China border long before then. In the following weeks, North Korea warned of an “explosive” outbreak.</p>

Since then, Kim has sought to emphasize officials' response to the health crisis, especially given the concentration of people afflicted with covid-like symptoms in Pyongyang, where the country's elites live.

"I believe the lack of disclosure is affected by the coronavirus outbreak. It is likely that by the end of April, North Korea's leadership realized how severe its outbreak has become," said Park Won-gon, professor of North Korean Studies at Ewha Womans University in Seoul. "Pyongyang's residents will likely not view Kim Jong Un's missile launches in a positive light as they are dealing with the covid crisis."

Park said this calculation may also be affecting the North's decision on when to conduct its seventh nuclear test, which would be its first since 2017. Intelligence officials from the United States, South Korea and Japan say North Korea has apparently completed preparations for the test, and is waiting for the right political timing. A nuclear test, typically detected by seismic monitors, would sharply increase tensions in the region and with the United States.

"It can't conduct its seventh nuclear test quietly without revealing it. In addition to military calculations over when to conduct its test, there is also a political calculation" that is linked with the message Kim needs to send domestically, Park said.

While North Korea often releases incomplete information about weapons tests, it sometimes publishes photos and videos that help analysts make sense of their significance — for example, depending on whether Kim is reported to have personally overseen a launch.

Even when North Korea announced previous domestic crises, such as food shortages or devastating floods, it still often touted its weapons development through a military parade or propaganda about its tests, said Colin Zwirko, senior analytical correspondent at NK News, a Seoul-based North Korea monitoring website.

North Korea's newfound restraint may also be a sign that it has been testing existing technology rather than trying out new developments, said Panda, the weapons analyst. According to the South Korean and Japanese governments, the tests Pyongyang conducted in May included several suspected short-range missiles, which the country has routinely launched this year.

When North Korea is ready to reveal a qualitatively new system, it will be sure to let the world know, he said.

"They're also generally shifting toward much more frequent operational and developmental testing like we'd see in other military powers," Panda said. "We should perhaps expect the higher tempo of testing to coincide with less publicity overall."

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HEADLINE	07/06 Global oil prices dip amid recession fears
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/06/business/energy-environment/oil-prices-decline.html
GIST	<p>HOUSTON — The global benchmark for oil dropped below \$100 a barrel on Wednesday for the first time since late April as fears of a looming recession spread among traders.</p> <p>Oil prices, which rose to above \$120 a barrel only a month ago, have been slipping over the last two weeks, but the drop has accelerated in recent days.</p> <p>Energy experts said there was no fundamental change in the energy market, apart from some signs that fuel sales may be slowing in the United States, which is feeding the perception that the economy is slowing. Metals and other commodities are also dropping in price.</p>

“If a recession materializes and inflation continues to push prices for almost everything higher, oil demand is almost certain to fall, bringing prices with it,” said Louise Dickson, a senior analyst at Rystad Energy, an analytical research firm.

There is a sharp divergence of opinion among experts about where the oil price will go in the weeks and months ahead. Prices will ultimately depend on how deep an eventual recession might be and how strong Chinese demand will become as the country emerges from the Covid pandemic.

There is no sign that the Russian war in Ukraine will end anytime soon, and despite tightening Western sanctions, Russian oil exports have remained more robust than many analysts had anticipated. If Europe runs short of natural gas next winter, utilities will be forced to burn more oil, which could crimp supplies and raise crude prices.

The price of Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, slid on Wednesday by 3 percent to \$99.61. West Texas Intermediate, the American benchmark, dropped 1 percent to \$98.53 a barrel.

Gasoline prices are also declining but at a slower pace because it normally takes a week or two for the price at the pump to fully account for crude prices. Petroleum goes through several stages of processing and marketing before reaching the gas station.

The national average price for regular gasoline on Wednesday dropped 2 cents to \$4.78 a gallon, 9 cents lower than a week ago. Average gas prices topped \$5 a gallon just over three weeks ago. Motorists are still paying \$1.65 a gallon more on average than a year ago.

Refinery capacity remains barely sufficient, especially with the United States sending more fuel to Europe to compensate for reductions in Russian imports. If a hurricane were to strike the Gulf of Mexico, damage to refineries could send gas and diesel prices soaring, experts warn.

Oil stocks, which have performed well all year, are suddenly falling. Shares of Hess and Marathon Petroleum dropped by more than 2 percent Wednesday.

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HEADLINE	07/06 Economic data: US faces rough road
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/06/business/economy/fed-rate-increase-inflation.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The Federal Reserve, determined to choke off rapid inflation before it becomes a permanent feature of the American economy, is steering toward another three-quarter-point interest rate increase later this month even as the economy shows early signs of slowing and recession fears mount.</p> <p>Economic data suggest that the United States could be headed for a rough road: Consumer confidence has plummeted, the economy could post two straight quarters of negative growth, new factory orders have sagged and oil and gas commodity prices have dipped sharply lower this week as investors fear an impending downturn.</p> <p>But that weakening is unlikely to dissuade central bankers. Some degree of economic slowdown would be welcome news for the Fed — which is actively trying to cool the economy — and a commitment to restoring price stability could keep officials on an aggressive policy path.</p> <p>Inflation measures are running at or near the fastest pace in four decades, and the job market, while moderating somewhat, remains unusually strong, with 1.9 available jobs for every unemployed worker. Fed policymakers are likely to focus on those factors as they head into their July meeting, especially because their policy interest rate — which guides how expensive it is to borrow money — is still low enough that it is likely spurring economic activity rather than subtracting from it.</p>

Minutes from the Fed's June meeting, [released Wednesday](#), made it clear that officials are eager to move rates up to a point where they are weighing on growth as policymakers ramp up their battle against inflation.

The central bank will announce its next rate decision on July 27, and several key data points are set for release between now and then, including the latest jobs numbers for June and updated Consumer Price Index inflation figures — so the size of the move is not set in stone. But assuming the economy remains strong, inflation remains high and glimmers of moderation remain far from conclusive, a big rate move may well be in store.

The Fed chair, Jerome H. Powell, has said that central bankers will debate between a 0.5- or 0.75-percentage-point increase at the coming gathering, but officials have begun to line up behind the more rapid pace of action if recent economic trends hold.

“If conditions were exactly the way they were today going into that meeting — if the meeting were today — I would be advocating for 75 because I haven't seen the kind of numbers on the inflation side that I need to see,” Loretta J. Mester, the president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, said during a television interview last week.

The Fed raised interest rates by 0.75 percentage points in June, its first move of that size since 1994 and one fueled by a growing concern that fast inflation had failed to fade as expected and was at risk of becoming a more permanent feature of the economy.

While the big increase came suddenly — investors did not expect such a large change until right before the meeting — policymakers have begun to signal earlier on in the decision-making process that they are in favor of going big in July.

Part of the amped-up urgency may stem from a recognition that the Fed is behind the curve and trying to fight inflation when interest rates, while rising quickly, remain relatively low, economists said.

“It is starting to look like 75 is the number,” said Michael Feroli, the chief U.S. economist at JPMorgan Chase. “We'd need a serious disappointment for them to downshift at this meeting.”

Fed interest rates are now set to a range of 1.5 to 1.75 percent, which is much higher than their near-zero setting at the start of 2022 but still probably low enough to stoke the economy. Officials have said that they want to “expeditiously” lift rates to the point at which they begin to weigh on growth — which they estimate is a rate around 2.5 percent.

The way they see it, “with inflation being this high, with the labor market being this tight, there's no need to be adding accommodation at this point,” said Alan Detmeister, a senior economist at UBS who spent more than a decade as an economist and section chief at the Fed's Board of Governors. “That's why they're moving up so aggressively.”

Central bankers know a recession is a possibility as they raise interest rates quickly, though they have said one is not inevitable. But [they have signaled](#) that they are willing to inflict some economic pain if that is what is needed to wrestle inflation back down.

Mr. Powell has repeatedly stressed that whether the Fed can gently slow the economy and cool inflation will hinge on factors outside of its control, like the trajectory of the war in Ukraine and global supply chain snarls.

For now, Fed officials are unlikely to interpret nascent evidence of a cooling economy as a surefire sign that it is tipping into recession. The unemployment rate is hovering near the lowest level in 50 years, the economy has gained an average of nearly [500,000 jobs per month](#) so far in 2022 and consumer spending — while [cracking slightly](#) under the weight of inflation — has been relatively strong.

Meanwhile, officials have been unnerved by both the speed and the staying power of inflation. The Consumer Price Index measure picked up by 8.6 percent over the year through May, and several economists said it probably continued to accelerate on a yearly basis into the June report, which is set for release on July 13. Omair Sharif, the founder of Inflation Insights, estimated that it could come in around 8.8 percent.

“You do probably get a few months of moderation after we get this June report,” he said.

The Fed’s preferred inflation measure, the Personal Consumption Expenditures index, may have already peaked, economists said. But it still [climbed by 6.3 percent](#) over the year through May, more than three times the central bank’s 2 percent target. Many households are struggling to keep up with the rising cost of housing, food and transportation.

While there are encouraging signs that inflation might slow soon — inventories have built up at retailers, [global commodity gas prices](#) have fallen this week and consumer demand for some goods may be beginning to slow — those indicators may do little to comfort central bankers at this stage.

The Fed has been repeatedly disappointed by false dawns. Officials had hoped that inflation peaked last summer, only to watch it reaccelerate into the fall. They have been receiving regular Wall Street predictions that it might be reaching its zenith, but those have yet to prove correct.

And Fed officials increasingly worry that they need to prove their commitment to pushing prices lower. If Americans come to believe that inflation will remain high year after year — if inflation expectations shift, in Fed parlance — they might demand bigger wage increases to cover those anticipated costs. In turn, businesses might make a habit of continually charging more to cover the bigger wage bills, creating a cycle of rising prices.

That would make inflation even more difficult — and more painful — to stamp out.

Many officials at the June meeting of the Fed’s policy-setting committee “judged that a significant risk now facing the committee was that elevated inflation could become entrenched if the public began to question the resolve of the committee to adjust the stance of policy as warranted,” according to the minutes released on Wednesday.

That is part of the rationale behind the Fed’s rapid rate path. Officials [have signaled that](#) they expect to push rates up to about 3.4 percent by the end of the year as they try to choke off price increases. They could achieve that by raising rates by 0.75 percentage points at their coming July meeting, 0.5 percentage points in September and 0.25 percentage points in November and December, for instance.

“What you would like to do, if we can, is nip inflation in the bud before it gets entrenched in the economy,” James Bullard, the president of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, said during a [presentation in Zurich](#) on June 24.

That is also the logic for making big moves sooner rather than later. Charles L. Evans, the president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, [told reporters](#) a few days earlier that a 0.75 percentage point move in July was “a very reasonable place to have a discussion” and would be likely unless inflation began moderating.

The Fed will have new information by the time of its July meeting, but the central bank may prove less sensitive than usual to incoming data in today’s environment. Minor updates might do little to change a picture in which price increases have been going gangbusters for months on end and officials believe expectations of rising inflation could lurch out of control.

“The data they’re responding to has been accumulating over the past year,” said Mr. Feroli of JPMorgan. “It was realizing that, over the past year, they missed the boat on inflation.”

HEADLINE	07/06 Ethnic killings in Ethiopia add to crisis
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/06/world/africa/ethiopia-ethnic-massacres.html
GIST	<p>NAIROBI, Kenya — Crises are multiplying across Ethiopia: hunger from the worst drought in four decades, skirmishes with neighboring Sudan and a brutal 20-month-long civil war in the northern region of Tigray.</p> <p>Now, ethnic violence is escalating in the Oromia region, where hundreds are said to have been killed in massacres in recent weeks — stoking yet another crisis in Ethiopia, Africa’s second-most-populous nation.</p> <p>Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on Monday accused a militant group, the Oromo Liberation Army, of carrying out a massacre in the region — the second in the last two weeks. But the group denied it, instead accusing militias allied with the government — and the facts are unclear.</p> <p>The violence in Oromia is a thorny challenge for Mr. Abiy, who is himself a member of the Oromo ethnic group. He was catapulted to power in 2018 in a wave of demonstrations in the region against the previous government. Those protests were stoked by Oromos who felt that they had been sidelined politically and economically, even though they were Ethiopia’s largest ethnic group.</p> <p>But as Mr. Abiy, who was born in Oromia, sought to centralize his authority, observers said that his actions isolated many in the region, particularly those who had been championing more autonomy. Mr. Abiy’s government responded by cracking down on protests, closing down offices linked to Oromo political groups and arresting leading activists, including Jawar Mohammed, a prominent critic of the prime minister.</p> <p>The clampdown pushed many young Oromo nationalists to “switch from peaceful protests and registered political parties to the rebellion” fronted by the Oromo Liberation Army, said William Davison, a senior Ethiopia analyst at the International Crisis Group.</p> <p>The new allegation by Mr. Abiy that the Oromo Liberation Army committed another massacre this week was backed up by the state-appointed Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, which said that the militant group had killed ethnic Amhara civilians in two villages in the Qellem Wollega area, about 370 miles west of the capital, Addis Ababa.</p> <p>Neither Mr. Abiy nor the commission provided a death toll, but Hone Mandefro, advocacy director for the Amhara Association of America, said that more than 300 people had been killed, with 120 buried on Tuesday in one of the villages. Dozens more were abducted during the attack, he said, and their whereabouts remain unknown.</p> <p>The Oromo Liberation Army, in a Twitter post on Tuesday, instead put the blame for the attacks on militias aligned with Mr. Abiy’s government.</p> <p>Their claim was bolstered late on Tuesday night, when a lawmaker from Mr. Abiy’s governing Prosperity Party disputed the official account, saying on a live video on Facebook that senior government officials in Oromia, including the region’s leader and police commissioner, had helped organize the attacks.</p> <p>The Prosperity Party lawmaker, Hangaasa Ahmed Ibraahim, called on Mr. Abiy to take action against the leadership in Oromia and to protect civilians.</p> <p>“We are tired of seeing rest-in-peace and condolence statements,” he said in a broadcast that stretched for nearly two hours, in which he urged Mr. Abiy: “Do your work to lead the country.”</p> <p>The head of communications for the Oromia region did not respond to requests for comment.</p> <p>Phone networks in the remote villages remained down on Wednesday, making it hard to reach residents.</p>

But Tolasa Raga, head of the Hawa Galan hospital in the town of Gaba Robi, about 10 miles from where the killings took place, said that the hospital had received 35 injured people.

“They all sustained bullet wounds, and some are in critical condition,” Mr. Raga said in a phone interview.

Mohammed Sied, a 45-year-old farmer from Gaba Robi, said that he and other villagers had gathered 30 bodies in front of a mosque in one of the villages and buried them.

The latest killings come on the heels of [another massacre](#), in western Oromia in June, when armed assailants stormed the village of Tole, which also has a majority Amhara population, and began indiscriminately shooting at civilians. The attack [left hundreds dead](#) and at least [2,000 others fleeing their homes](#), according to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The Ethiopian authorities designated the Oromo Liberation Army a terrorist group last year and have ramped up efforts to defeat the group. Mr. Abiy this week [promised to pursue the Oromo Liberation Army](#) and “eliminate” it.

The militants have [struck alliances with others opposed to Mr. Abiy](#), including forces from the northern region of Tigray, and recently [partnered with another rebel group](#) to carry out offensives in the neighboring Gambela region.

The troubles in Oromia also come as the federal government in Addis Ababa prepares for peace talks with the leadership in Tigray. [The civil war there](#) started in November of 2020, and has resulted in widespread displacement, ethnic cleansing and sexual violence.

Ethiopia is also grappling with one of the most severe droughts to hit the country in four decades, leaving millions of people hungry. Last week, UNICEF said that [child marriage in Ethiopia had more than doubled](#) in the past year in the regions worst hit by the drought because parents were marrying off their young girls for financial reasons.

At the same time, Mr. Abiy is confronting a diplomatic standoff with Sudan, which has accused Ethiopian forces of capturing and killing its soldiers at a disputed border area last month — [accusations that the Ethiopian government denied](#).

During a summit for regional states in Nairobi, Kenya, on Tuesday, Mr. Abiy met Sudan’s army chief, Lt. Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and [said that the two had agreed to seek “peaceful resolution to outstanding issues.”](#)

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HEADLINE	07/06 Haitians wait to hit rock bottom
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/06/world/americas/haiti-jovenel-moise-assassination.html
GIST	<p>The warring gangs took over several neighborhoods around Port-au-Prince weeks ago, going door to door, raping women and girls, killing the men, beheading many of the adults and then forcing the newly orphaned children into their ranks.</p> <p>One woman, Kenide Charles, took cover with her 4-month-old baby underneath a bed, waiting for the fighting to subside. It never did and she fled, crossing gang checkpoints with her son raised above her head, like a human white flag.</p> <p>This week marks a year since President Jovenel Moïse of Haiti was murdered in his home in one of the capital’s wealthiest neighborhoods as dozens of police stepped aside, letting the assassins through. Many Haitians had no love for the deeply unpopular president, but thought his assassination would be the country’s new rock bottom and believed they could start climbing back up.</p> <p>Instead, the picture remains grim with a seeming state of lawlessness taking hold in parts of the country.</p>

[Mr. Moïse was killed in a sprawling plot](#) that ensnared Colombian ex-soldiers, informants for the United States Drug Enforcement Administration and American citizens. Haitian government officials were also accused of playing a role. A key suspect in the killing is expected to stand trial in Florida. The international community promised to help solve the president's murder and prevent the crime from contributing to a mountain of impunity that has plagued Haiti for centuries.

But the many questions around Mr. Moïse's killing remain unanswered, contributing to a broken central government and a rising dominance of multiple gangs.

The violence that recently rocked Ms. Charles's impoverished neighborhood over nearly two weeks in May is a sign of how brutal life is for many Haitians.

"I see no future in Haiti for my kids," Ms. Charles, 37, said. "Even to feed them is a struggle." Her older daughter, Charnide, 9, sat nervously next to her mother, her shoulder-length braids adorned by lavender-colored beads.

When Ms. Charles was finally able to return to her neighborhood on the outskirts of Haiti's capital, the entire block of houses where her home once stood had been burned to the ground. The corpses of at least 91 victims lay along the streets or in their homes, while the attack left at least 158 children orphans, many of whom were then recruited by gangs, according to the National Human Rights Defense Network, a Port-au-Prince-based rights monitor.

Like many Haitians, Ms. Charles worries that if Mr. Moïse cannot get true justice, what chance does she have to live a life of dignity in a country with some of the world's highest rates of inequality?

"I live in a country where the president was killed," Ms. Charles said. "If something like this can happen to a president with all that security, what about me in my house? What about me walking in the streets? What about my children?"

Two investigations into Mr. Moïse's assassination, one by the Haitian government and another by the United States, have led to several arrests.

In Haiti, jailed suspects in the assassination have not been put on trial — including 18 Colombian ex-soldiers considered by many to be pawns in the plot. Judges and legal clerks in the case have been threatened and told to change witness testimony.

And a key suspect in the assassination — Prime Minister Ariel Henry of Haiti — fired government officials who summoned him for questioning in the case. Phone records indicate Mr. Henry had spoken with the man accused of masterminding the assassination, Joseph Felix Badio, a former justice ministry official, in the days leading to and hours after Mr. Moïse's death. The prime minister has denied wrongdoing and Mr. Badio remains free.

A separate United States government-led probe has also yielded no answers and instead raised suspicions of a link between the assassins and American intelligence agencies, including the C.I.A. A chief suspect in the case, Mario Palacios, a former Colombian soldier, was extradited to Florida in January to stand trial.

The Justice Department stunned observers when it requested that the court in Miami hearing Mr. Palacios's case appoint a "Classified Information Security Officer" to bar the suspect's testimony from being made public because he has an undisclosed link to American intelligence agencies.

The Drug Enforcement Administration has refused to answer questions regarding several of the Haitian suspects in the case who have served as agency informants. In May, the Senate Judiciary Committee rebuked the D.E.A. for failing to respond to queries regarding its conduct in Haiti.

Justice has also been elusive for the 18 Colombian ex-soldiers jailed in Haiti. They have complained of torture at the hands of the Haitian police, a lack of food and access to showers or bathrooms. The judge in their case has been changed five times and the Colombians have yet to meet a lawyer, 12 months after their imprisonment.

Haiti's justice minister did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

"Not even a judge has heard them, they have not even been charged," said Diana Arbelaez, the wife of one of the accused former soldiers.

"There is no evidence, because if they had it they would have been accused," she added.

Ms. Arbelaez said she and other wives send food packages to their husbands in prison and include bags for them to defecate in, because they are rarely allowed to use latrines and had been relieving themselves on the floors of their cells.

Sandra Bonilla, whose husband is also one of the 18 Colombian prisoners, traveled to Haiti to see her husband late last year and said she saw signs of torture, including festering wounds and missing teeth.

Colombia's government maintains that since the alleged crimes involving the former soldiers happened in Haiti, they must be tried there, rather than Colombia.

Colombia's Vice President Marta Lucia Ramírez said in an interview that the administration was eager for the accused to face trial, blaming Haiti's faltering justice system for leaving the men in limbo. She plans to visit the men in prison.

In Haiti, the violence that has stalked Haitians struck the country's largest court last month, when a gang took over the Judicial Palace and set fire to files. A month later, the gang still occupies the court.

For Ms. Charles, her family's only stroke of luck was that she had sent her three older children out of the neighborhood just days before the attack began on May 1. Their schools had been closed all of April because of violence and she worried their boredom would make them easy prey for the gangs.

The violence that swept across Ms. Charles's neighborhood was part of a wave that consumed much of Port-au-Prince in April and May, displacing 16,000 people as internal refugees, according to the United Nations. The organization added that gang violence forced 1,700 schools to shut down in and around the capital, leaving roughly 500,000 children out of their classrooms. Some schools have been targeted by gangs, looking for students to kidnap for ransom.

"Extreme violence has been reported, including beheadings, chopping and burning of bodies, and the killing of minors accused of being informants for a rival gang," the United Nations said in May.

"Sexual violence, including gang rape of children as young as 10, has also been used by armed gang members to terrorize and punish people living in areas controlled by rival gangs," the U.N. added.

Many aid groups say they have had difficulties implementing their programs because of the violence, or because gangs demand bribes to work in their territory. When they are able to enter neighborhoods they see children struggling.

"When the children's schools are closed, they don't have anything to do, and the parents need to work, what will happen?" said Judes Jonathas, a senior program manager for Mercy Corps in Haiti, one of the largest aid groups operating in the country. "It's a huge danger, they are huge magnets for the gangs."

Just a few weeks after Mr. Moïse's killing, a powerful earthquake rocked the country, killing more than 2,000.

	“It’s multiple crises in Haiti,” Mr. Jonathas said. “Can you imagine a child growing up in Haiti today, what kind of options they have in the future? What kind of people will they be?”
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HEADLINE	07/06 FBI: ‘clue’ China view on Taiwan future
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/06/world/asia/fbi-china-taiwan-sanctions.html
GIST	<p>LONDON — Learning from Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, China is looking for ways to protect its economy from the threat of international sanctions should a confrontation over Taiwan occur, “a clue” to Beijing’s view of what the future holds, the F.B.I. director said Wednesday.</p> <p>Western sanctions over the war and Russian retaliation have cost Western businesses billions of dollars in Russia, and they could be caught in a similar but far bigger and more dangerous scenario should China invade Taiwan, said the director, Christopher A. Wray.</p> <p>China is seeking to insulate its economy against potential sanctions, “trying to cushion themselves from harm if they do anything to draw the ire of the international community,” he said. “In our world, we call that kind of behavior a clue.”</p> <p>Western business is much more deeply invested in China, which is trying to make it more difficult for foreign companies operating there to cooperate with international sanctions. If China does invade Taiwan, Mr. Wray said, companies from the United States and its allies would find themselves caught.</p> <p>“Just as in Russia, Western investments built over years could become hostages, capital stranded, supply chains and relationships disrupted,” he said. “Companies caught between sanctions and Chinese law forbidding compliance with those sanctions. That is not just geopolitics, it’s business forecasting.”</p> <p>The remarks came during an unusual joint address in London by Mr. Wray and Ken McCallum, director general of MI5, the British security service, warning about threats from China to U.S., British and Western businesses.</p> <p>While the Biden administration has tempered some of the Trump administration’s efforts to counter Chinese espionage, Mr. Wray has continued to speak regularly about the threat China poses, as it sends out agents, makes strategic investments and launches cyberattacks aimed at stealing the intellectual property and know-how of overseas businesses and universities.</p> <p>In a question-and-answer session after the speech, Mr. Wray said the Chinese government is pressuring Western businesses as aggressively as ever not to criticize Beijing or its policies, but he declined to say whether an invasion of Taiwan had become more or less likely.</p> <p>“I will say that I don’t have any reason to think their interest in Taiwan has abated in any fashion,” he said. “We certainly hope that they are learning valuable lessons of what happens when you overplay your hand in a way that the Russians clearly have in Ukraine”</p> <p>Some American officials have argued that failing to take a tough stand against Russia’s war on Ukraine would tempt Beijing into acting against Taiwan.</p> <p>During the Trump administration, Mr. Wray was one of a series of senior national security officials delivering speeches describing China as a rising threat. But his latest speech comes as the Biden administration has been focused on the immediate threat of Russia and its invasion of Ukraine and has taken steps to change some of the Trump administration’s programs to counter China.</p> <p>Earlier this year the Justice Department modified a Trump-era initiative to combat Chinese espionage, treating many cases of academics failing to disclose ties or funding from China as civil violations, not crimes. While some prosecutions had resulted in convictions, others had led to acquittal or dismissal.</p>

Officials in China have held up the initiative as an example of the United States' hypocrisy and systemic discrimination against ethnic minorities.

On Wednesday, Mr. Wray largely steered clear of Chinese efforts to take intellectual property from American universities, instead focusing on ways Beijing uses cyberespionage and human assets to steal information and technology from Western businesses and funnel it to Chinese competitors.

"The Chinese government poses an even more serious threat to Western businesses than even many sophisticated business people realize," Mr. Wray said.

Mr. McCallum, the MI5 director general, struck similar themes, but highlighted how China uses a patient approach, conducting coordinated influence campaigns that can last for decades.

"The most game-changing challenge we face comes from the Chinese Communist Party," Mr. McCallum said. "It's covertly applying pressure across the globe. This might feel abstract, but it is real and it is pressing."

While American law enforcement and intelligence officials have been warning about the problem for years, it is a far more recent phenomenon for British security officials, who until last year made few public comments about the Chinese threat.

MI5 is running seven times more investigations involving Chinese espionage than it did in 2018, and plans to double the current number in the coming years, Mr. McCallum said.

Beijing has pushed back forcefully against U.S. warnings about a Chinese threat, calling such comments political lies that recycled old Cold War-era tropes as part of a broader attempt to contain and suppress China's rise. Chinese officials have sought to portray economic and trade ties between the U.S. and China as mutually beneficial, with a vice foreign minister saying as recently as last November that among the over 70,000 American companies doing business in China, 97 percent were earning profits.

Mr. Wray argued that China poses a broader threat to Western politics as well as business. Some American intelligence agencies have argued that China does not try to spread chaos and dissension, or broadly disrupt the democratic process, as Russia has in recent elections, but other officials say it is important not to view China's actions too narrowly.

On Wednesday Mr. Wray said many of China's efforts take the form of malign campaigns to influence American policy, political candidates and public opinion, as distinct from swaying elections. But he also noted the recent case of Chinese government agents charged with trying to [influence a Congressional race in New York](#) by derailing the candidacy of a former Tiananmen Square protester. In that case federal prosecutors contend that China tried to manufacture a fake controversy with a sex worker then considered arranging for the candidate to be struck by a vehicle.

That plot, Mr. Wray said, took the threat "to a whole another level."

Also on Wednesday, the U.S. government's National Counterintelligence and Security Center [released a new warning to government and business leaders](#) about Chinese efforts to manipulate them to support "hidden agendas."

Chinese officials have disputed the idea that Beijing attempts to meddle in American affairs, calling such accusations baseless and an attempt to use China as a scapegoat and distraction from the United States' own domestic problems. The officials have held fast to the line that China supports "noninterference" in the domestic matters of sovereign countries, including elections, as a matter of principle.

While neither Mr. Wray nor Mr. McCallum would directly compare the influence threat from China to that of Russia, both made the case that Beijing works over the long term, cultivating local officials over decades.

	<p>“It’s not always the case of seeking to influence a national leader or someone a cabinet level,” Mr. McCallum said. “They are prepared to invest in cultivating people at local government level potentially at the outset of their political careers. And I think that in itself actually illustrates the breadth and the patience of this threat.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/07 Embattled UK PM agrees to resign
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jul/7/boris-johnson-embattled-uk-prime-minister-agrees-t/
GIST	<p>LONDON (AP) — Prime Minister Boris Johnson has agreed to resign, his office said Thursday, ending an unprecedented political crisis over his future that has paralyzed Britain’s government.</p> <p>An official in Johnson’s Downing Street office confirmed the prime minister would announce his resignation later. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because the announcement had not yet been made.</p> <p>Johnson had rebuffed calls by his Cabinet to step down in the wake of ethics scandals. He gave in after more than 40 ministers quit his government and told him to go.</p> <p>It was not immediately clear whether Johnson would stay in office while the Conservative Party chooses a new leader, who will replace him as prime minister.</p> <p>Minutes before the news broke, Treasury chief Nadhim Zahawi called on Prime Minister Boris Johnson to resign just 36 hours after Johnson put him in the job, while another newly appointed Cabinet minister quit her post.</p> <p>Zahawi said Johnson knew “the right thing to do” was to “go now.”</p> <p>Zahawi was appointed late Tuesday to replace Rishi Sunak, who resigned saying he could no longer support Johnson after a series of ethics scandals.</p> <p>Education Secretary Michelle Donelan, who was also appointed on Tuesday following the resignation of her predecessor, announced her resignation Thursday morning.</p> <p>Johnson had rejected clamors for his resignation, digging in his heels even as dozens of officials quit and previously loyal allies urge him to go after yet another scandal engulfed his leadership.</p> <p>A group of Johnson’s most trusted Cabinet ministers visited him at his office in Downing Street Wednesday, telling him to stand down after losing the trust of his party. But Johnson instead opted to fight for his political career and fired one of the Cabinet officials, Michael Gove, British media reported.</p> <p>It is rare for a prime minister to cling on to office in the face of this much pressure from his Cabinet colleagues. The Guardian’s frontpage on Thursday called him “Desperate, deluded.”</p> <p>“He’s breached the trust that was put in him. He needs to recognise that he no longer has the moral authority to lead. And for him, it’s over,” Scottish National Party leader Ian Blackford told The Associated Press.</p> <p>Johnson, 58, was known for his knack for wiggling out of tight spots. He remained in power despite allegations that he was too close to party donors, that he protected supporters from bullying and corruption allegations, and that he misled Parliament and was dishonest to the public about government office parties that broke pandemic lockdown rules.</p> <p>But recent disclosures that Johnson knew about sexual misconduct allegations against Chris Pincher, a Conservative lawmaker, before he promoted the man to a senior position turned out to be the last straw.</p>

	<p>Last week, Pincher resigned as deputy chief whip after complaints he groped two men at a private club. That triggered a series of reports about past allegations leveled against Pincher — and shifting explanations from the government about what Johnson knew when he tapped him for a senior job enforcing party discipline.</p> <p>Health Secretary Sajid Javid and Treasury chief Rishi Sunak resigned within minutes of each other Wednesday over the scandal. The two Cabinet heavyweights were responsible for tackling two of the biggest issues facing Britain - the cost-of-living crisis and COVID-19.</p> <p>Javid captured the mood of many lawmakers when he said Johnson’s actions threaten to undermine the integrity of the Conservative Party and the British government.</p> <p>“At some point we have to conclude that enough is enough,” he told fellow lawmakers Wednesday. “I believe that point is now.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/06 US exports strategic oil reserve to Europe
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jul/6/joe-biden-sends-5-million-barrels-of-us-oil-to-eur/
GIST	<p>The U.S. has allowed more than 5 million barrels of oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to be exported to Europe and Asia, a move that contradicts President Biden’s statements about trying to bring down the cost of soaring prices at the pump.</p> <p>The exports are part of a broader and historic release of 1 million barrels per day through October from the reserves, one of several efforts by Mr. Biden to blunt high fuel costs that have had minimal impacts.</p> <p>Phillips 66, one of the country’s largest oil refiners, has shipped roughly 470,000 barrels from a reserve storage site in Texas to Italy, according to Reuters. Atlantic Trading & Marketing, part of French oil company TotalEnergies, exported more than 1.1 million.</p> <p>The outlet reported that U.S. crude from the reserves was also bound for the Netherlands, India and China.</p> <p>In total, Mr. Biden plans to release up to 260 million barrels of oil from domestic reserves from October 2021 through October 2022. There were roughly 618 million barrels at the end of September 2021. The reserve is expected to be depleted to less than 400 million, the lowest since 1984.</p> <p>The average price for a gallon of regular gas was \$4.78 as of Wednesday, according to AAA. It has come down slightly in the past several weeks from its previous high of roughly \$5 per gallon, but costs remain far above that of a year ago when it was \$3.13.</p> <p>The White House in recent days has doubled down on its criticism of Big Oil by reiterating its call for energy companies and gas stations to trim their profits due to Russia’s war in Ukraine that has exacerbated the lack of global supply.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/06 ‘ChinaDan’ hacks Shanghai police files
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jul/6/chinadan-hacks-shanghai-police-files-1-billion-peo/
GIST	<p>An unidentified computer hacker successfully obtained a massive database from a police network in Shanghai, a database that includes records held by the security organization on an estimated 1 billion Chinese citizens.</p> <p>The hacker, identified only by the handle “ChinaDan,” appeared on a hacker forum called BreachForums last week seeking to sell the police files. The information, about 23 terabytes of data, would be valuable to U.S. and Western intelligence agencies and was offered for sale by the hacker for 10 Bitcoin, or about \$200,000.</p>

ChinaDan stated that the database was gathered by the Shanghai police, and included sensitive information such as the addresses, mobile numbers, national ID numbers, ages and birthplaces of those on the list.

“In 2022, the Shanghai National Police (SHGA) database was leaked. This database contains many [terabytes] of data and information on billions of Chinese citizens,” the hacker stated on the forum.

The records also included billions of logs of phone calls to police from people reporting civil disputes and crimes.

The breach is the second major leak of police files in China in recent days. A cache of police records from Xinjiang in western China was made public recently by researcher Adrian Zenz.

According to CNN, more than two dozen entries from a sampling of 750,000 data entries from the database were verified as authentic.

The leak, which would rank as one of the largest data breaches in the world, triggered social media discussion inside China. Censors, however, quickly cracked down on any public mention of the apparent security breach.

The hacker who offered the information for sale stated that the database had been placed on a cloud server hosted by Alibaba Cloud, a subsidiary of the Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba.

“As it stands today, I believe this would be the largest leak of public information yet — certainly in terms of the breadth of the impact in China. We’re talking about most of the population here,” Troy Hunt, a Microsoft regional director in Australia, told CNN. “It’s a little bit of a case where the genie is not going to be able to go back in the bottle. Once the data is out there in the form it appears to be now, there’s no going back.”

The records included cases from 2001 to 2019 ranging from civil to criminal cases, including fraud and rape, and is likely to provide Western cybersecurity and intelligence analysts valuable insights on how Chinese police and security services operate. The information was said to have come from the Shanghai government National Police Database.

It is not clear whether the leaked information belongs to the Ministry of Public Security, the national political police agency, or the Ministry of State Security, the civilian intelligence service.

Shanghai’s MSS bureau is focused on conducting operations against the United States and thus the information contained in the database would be useful for FBI and CIA counterspies engaged in tracking Chinese intelligence operations.

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HEADLINE	07/06 Rising Covid cases European destinations
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/06/holidaymakers-warned-of-rising-coronavirus-cases-at-european-destinations
GIST	<p>Holidaymakers heading to and from the European mainland are being warned of a growing incidence of coronavirus, especially in tourist hotspots, which risks hampering travel plans.</p> <p>Health officials are calling in some cases for a reintroduction of face masks and other measures, and are urging travellers to exercise personal responsibility, warning that an escalation of the virus could lead to the swift return of restrictions.</p> <p>Greece, Spain, France and Germany – as well as further-afield destinations such as the Caribbean islands, Morocco and Tunisia – are all recording significant rises in cases.</p>

As holidaymakers study national coronavirus infection rates before embarking on their journeys, despite difficulties in making comparisons due to the different ways in which nations test, those who are yet to be fully vaccinated – with a double dose and either one or two booster shots, depending on their age or risk factors – are being urged by medical professionals to get the recommended protection before travelling.

Greece is among the countries to have reported a rise in cases in recent weeks. Most affected right now are people aged between 18 and 24, and cases are most concentrated in popular tourist regions, the Greek health ministry has said. Last weekend about 11,700 new infections were reported within 24 hours, an almost threefold increase on the previous week.

The number of new infections on the islands of Corfu, Cephalonia and Zakynthos in the Ionian Sea has risen in recent weeks. Crete, the region of Attica including the Greek capital, Athens, the southern Aegean including islands such as Mykonos and Paros, plus the islands of Rhodes and Kos are also very much on the authorities' radar.

Greece abolished the majority of its coronavirus measures in May. Face masks are still obligatory in public indoor spaces, however, including hospitals as well as on public transport and cruise ships.

Experts across Europe also talk of a high number of unreported or under-reported cases as the legal obligation to report infections in many places has been dropped.

Across Spain, cases are up more than 60% from last month, although still a fraction of what they were at the start of the year. In particular the virus is making itself felt on the islands of Mallorca, Ibiza, Menorca and Formentera, favourite destinations of Britons, Germans and Scandinavians. Doctors there have called the current level “alarming”, with local media reporting that a boundless appetite for concentrated gatherings to party, after years of pandemic restrictions, is creating “idyllic” conditions for the spread of the highly contagious Omicron variant BA.5, which is helping to fuel a new wave.

Currently 80% of all infections there are said to be of the BA.5 variety, according to Antonio Oliver, the chief virologist of the Hospital Son Espases, Mallorca's biggest hospital. He said his experience reflected what was happening on the Spanish mainland as well as the Canary islands.

People who become infected are no longer required to go into self-isolation in Spain, but an obligation to wear a mask in public indoor spaces and public transport remains in place.

On a positive note, Oliver said while the region was experiencing its seventh wave, “it is the case that this wave is less visible than was the case with earlier infection episodes”. He put this down to two main reasons: vaccines mean the number of serious illnesses is lower, and authorities are no longer closely controlling the disease's systematic spread. The seven-day incidence rate is now gauged only for over-60s, who are statistically far more likely to end up being treated for their symptoms in hospital.

Nationwide in Spain there are currently about 10,000 people being treated for Covid-19, making up 8% of all hospital bed capacity. This is very low compared with when the virus was at its height, but still high enough to cause a considerable strain on resources.

France has registered a growing number of cases, up almost 80% in just over two weeks. But a reintroduction of restrictions does not have any popular support. An obligation to wear a face mask was scrapped recently, although the health minister, Brigitte Bourguignon, appealed to people's “civic duty” to continue to do so on public transport and in other crowded places.

Italy has recorded a five-month high in cases and continues to insist on mask wearing on public transport. Roberto Speranza, the health minister, has urged people who are infected to “do their duty” and stay at home.

Portugal is seen as a higher-risk destination after a surge in cases, and travellers are still required to prove that they are vaccinated, tested or recovered and to wear masks. The seven-day incidence rate remains high compared with most nearby countries, at 1,150 per 100,000 population.

As cases rise in Germany due to the spread of the BA.5 Omicron subvariant, deaths from Covid currently number about 500 a week, which health authorities describe as unacceptably high. Cases on intensive care wards are up 12% from a week ago.

Germany's health minister, Karl Lauterbach, who has a reputation for his blunt utterances on the virus, said while he was hopeful that the summer holidays would lead to its confinement, it was also to be expected that the country would have to be prepared for some "very serious variants" that would return from abroad with holidaymakers and would be felt in the autumn.

People are being urged to take up a new vaccine engineered to cope with the Omicron variant from September. The German chancellor, Olaf Scholz, has not shied away from admitting that mask wearing is likely to become obligatory again in the coming autumn and winter. Currently in Germany people are required to wear medical FFP2 masks on public transport and in hospitals and medical practices. Those infected are required to isolate for at least five days, after which they are free to leave home if they test negative.

German and Austrian holidaymakers concerned that their vacations might be disrupted by illness or virus-related cancellations are being urged to take out coronavirus travel cancellation insurance. Such uncertainty is thought likely to fuel domestic tourism yet again throughout Europe.

Anke Herrmann, the owner of a travel agency in Leipzig, said the insurance was proving particularly popular with customers travelling to the Mediterranean and helped people already nervous about booking due to the virus to go ahead. "Some people are understandably scared also due to the war in Europe and rising inflation – they wonder if they should do it at all," she said.

Michael Stürmer, a virologist from Frankfurt, said most people did not need to worry about the course of the illness any more should they get sick, but rather about the risk of getting stuck. "Those who are flying should be as consistent as possible about wearing a mask and avoiding crowds," he told the broadcaster Hessenschau. "It's hard to do much more than that. You should just be aware of the risks and of the fact that it can easily go belly-up."

Christian Drosten, a virologist who has been a leading voice in explaining the virus to Germans, warned against advice that was being spread via social media urging people to catch the virus deliberately in the summer so as to be immune against it in the harsher winter months.

"That is total nonsense," he told Der Spiegel. "You'd never manage to get that many people infected in summer that it would keep the cases low in winter anyway ... No one should get infected deliberately, one should continue to avoid this as far as possible, not least because of the risk of long Covid."

Drosten said that for his part he would be enjoying a camping holiday.

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HEADLINE	07/06 FBI, MI5 joint warning on China govt. spying
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/06/fbi-mi5-china-spying-cyberattacks-business-economy
GIST	<p>The head of the FBI and the leader of Britain's domestic intelligence agency have delivered an unprecedented joint address raising fresh alarm about the Chinese government, warning business leaders that Beijing is determined to steal their technology for competitive gain.</p> <p>In a speech at MI5's London headquarters intended as a show of western solidarity, Christopher Wray, the FBI director, stood alongside the MI5 director general, Ken McCallum. Wray reaffirmed longstanding</p>

concerns about economic espionage and hacking operations by China as well as the Chinese government's efforts to stifle dissent abroad.

"We consistently see that it's the Chinese government that poses the biggest long-term threat to our economic and national security, and by 'our', I mean both of our nations, along with our allies in Europe and elsewhere," Wray said.

He told the audience the Chinese government was "set on stealing your technology, whatever it is that makes your industry tick, and using it to undercut your business and dominate your market".

Ken McCallum said MI5 was running seven times as many investigations into China as it had been four years ago and planned to "grow as much again" to tackle the widespread attempts at inference which pervade "so many aspects of our national life".

"Today is the first time the heads of the FBI and MI5 have shared a public platform," McCallum said. "We're doing so to send the clearest signal we can on a massive shared challenge: China."

McCallum said the Chinese government and its "covert pressure across the globe" amounted to "the most game-changing challenge we face."

"This might feel abstract. But it's real and it's pressing," he said. "We need to talk about it. We need to act."

A spokesman for the Chinese embassy in Washington, Liu Pengyu, rejected the allegations from the western leaders, saying in an emailed statement to the Associated Press that China "firmly opposes and combats all forms of cyber-attacks" and calling the accusations groundless.

"We will never encourage, support or condone cyber-attacks," the statement said.

In a nod to current tensions between China and Taiwan, Wray also said during his speech that any forcible takeover of Taipei by Beijing "would represent one of the most horrific business disruptions the world has ever seen".

Last week, the US government's director of national intelligence, Avril Haines, said at an event in Washington that there were no indications that Xi Jinping, the Chinese president, was poised to take Taiwan by military force. But she did say Xi appeared to be "pursuing the potential" for such an action as part of a broader Chinese government goal of reunification with Taiwan.

After the appearance, Wray said he would leave to others the question of whether an invasion of Taiwan was more or less likely after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But, he said, "I don't have any reason to think their interest in Taiwan has abated in any fashion" and added that he hoped China had learned what happens "when you overplay your hand", as he said Russia had.

Joe Biden said in May that the US would respond militarily if China invaded Taiwan, offering one of the most forceful White House statements in support of Taiwan's self-governing in decades. The White House later tried to soften the impact of the statement, saying Biden was not outlining a change in US policy toward Taiwan, a self-governing island that China views as a breakaway province that should be reunified with the mainland.

The embassy spokesman said the Taiwan issue was "purely China's internal affair" and said when it came to questions of China's territory and sovereignty, the country has "no room for compromise or concession."

"We will strive for the prospect of peaceful reunification with utmost sincerity and efforts," the statement said, though it noted that China would "reserve the option of taking all necessary measures in response to the interference of foreign forces".

HEADLINE	07/06 Seattle shrinking or growing?
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/data/is-seattle-shrinking-or-still-growing-depends-who-you-ask/
GIST	<p>If you're one of those folks who say Seattle is dying, you'll find data showing a shrinking population to back you up. But if you're a Seattle booster who thinks the boom times haven't ended, you'll find data showing continued growth.</p> <p>How can that be?</p> <p>Recent census data, which I've reported on in my column, showed both Seattle and King County had a slight loss of population from 2020 to 2021, but data from the Washington Office of Financial Management (OFM), which I've also written about, showed modest growth in both the county and Seattle.</p> <p>Both the federal and state governments produce annual population data for Washington's cities and counties. Typically, these numbers are in close agreement.</p> <p>Lately, though, there's been a discrepancy.</p> <p>It's occurred to me that by reporting on these conflicting data, I may have confused some of my readers. So let's take a look at what might have happened.</p> <p>Something to always keep in mind with population estimates is that they are just that — estimates. They're not exact numbers. Only the decennial census, like the one in 2020, is meant to be a precise head count, and even that isn't perfect.</p> <p>The Census Bureau and OFM also have differences in methodology. Their annual estimates are never exactly the same, although they are typically close (and note that the Census Bureau produces population estimates for July 1 each year, while OFM's are for April 1.)</p> <p>Another important point is that the past couple of years have been anything but ordinary. The difficulties of record-keeping during the pandemic could certainly help explain why the Census Bureau and OFM saw our local population trending in different directions, according to Mike Mohrman, an OFM senior forecast analyst.</p> <p>"As you know, a lot of data collection was disrupted by the pandemic, not only the 2020 census itself but school data, drivers data and other data collections were disrupted," Mohrman said in an email. "This is an especially difficult time for those of us in this line of work."</p> <p>And even though data from the Census Bureau and OFM showed population trending in opposite directions, the actual difference between their 2021 estimates isn't really that big.</p> <p>OFM showed Seattle's population at 742,000 and the Census Bureau's number was 734,000 — a difference of only about 8,000. The two agencies' estimates for King County were different by about 35,000, which isn't so huge considering the total population was nearly 2.3 million last year.</p> <p>The two agencies are on different timetables in releasing their population data. The Census Bureau has a greater lag time — their 2021 figures came out only this spring — while OFM just released its 2022 estimates last week.</p> <p>The new OFM data shows growth has picked up steam as we emerge from the pandemic.</p> <p>King County grew by around 30,000 from April 1, 2021 to April 1, 2022, and the population passed the 2.3 million mark. Most of the county's growth was in Seattle, which is a similar pattern to what we saw in the 2010s, when Seattle grew at a much faster rate than the suburbs.</p>

Return to Top	<p>Seattle’s population hit 762,500 in 2022, up around 20,000 from the year before. That’s an increase of 2.7%, which isn’t so far off from the impressive growth rates we saw in the boom era of the 2010s.</p> <p>In comparison, King County (not including Seattle) grew by only around 10,500 residents, or a .7% increase.</p> <p>The primary engine of growth in King County was migration, with about 22,000 more people moving in than moving away in the one-year period. OFM’s data also shows roughly 23,500 births and 15,000 deaths in King County, for what’s called a “natural increase” of close to 8,300.</p> <p>Among King County cities with at least 5,000 residents, the strongest growth was in Black Diamond, up 15.5%. Black Diamond is home to a large new master-planned community called Ten Trails, which is being built in phases. This community, which opened in 2018, will eventually include roughly 6,000 homes, bringing more than 15,000 people to Black Diamond.</p> <p>Only two King County cities declined (slightly) in population: Lake Forest Park and SeaTac.</p> <p>The Census Bureau has not yet released its 2022 population estimate for cities and counties, and those numbers won’t be out until next year. We’ll have to wait to find out if they confirm that growth in Seattle and King County has rebounded.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/06 Army new problems as vax deadline passes
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/national-news/articles/2022-07-06/army-reserve-guard-face-growing-vaccine-criticism-as-deadline-passes
GIST	<p>The Army has not yet indicated whether it will discharge tens of thousands of soldiers, National Guard troops and Reserve forces who missed the deadline to get a COVID-19 vaccination amid frustration with protocols from a pandemic-weary public and growing criticism that the military’s mandates endanger national security.</p> <p>Members of the Guard and Reserve had until June 30 to get vaccinated for the coronavirus – the final deadline among all the service branches following the military-wide orders Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin issued last August. Those particular components have since confirmed that at least 11% of each remain unvaccinated, accounting for tens of thousands of forces now subject to harsh penalties, including potential separation from service.</p> <p>According to the latest numbers from June 30, 89% of both the National Guard and the Army Reserve had received one dose of the vaccine, and 87% of the Guard and 88% of the Reserve were fully vaccinated.</p> <p>The deadline approaches as much of America is experiencing coronavirus fatigue, with mask mandates dropped across the country and vaccine uptake dipping even as more age groups become eligible for the shot. Even though daily case counts consistently top 100,000 – a figure thought to be a vast undercount – and deaths are holding steady at around 300 after peaking above 2,000 per day during the winter months, many consider the pandemic to be over. That has made enforcement of mandates and restrictions, in particular, politically unpopular.</p> <p>Despite the military’s regimented deadlines, the services have expressed they wish to continue to work with the remaining holdouts as commanders face increased outrage from critics – particularly Republican leaders – who cite dramatic shortfalls in Army recruiting that they say will worsen if the branch resorts to large-scale discharges.</p> <p>“The Army priority remains vaccinating all Soldiers to maintain readiness. In determining this policy, Army leaders considered the unique realities of each component,” Reserve spokesman John Bradley tells U.S. News in an emailed statement.</p>

Unlike a full-time active-duty soldier who could meet with a commander at any time about concerns over the mandates, Bradley observes that the structure of the Reserve forces – meeting one weekend a month, two weeks a year and often traveling from distant states or far-flung territories – leaves its leaders with limited windows to meet and address these concerns. The obstacles unique to the various military services led to Austin’s decision in August to allow each to determine its own deadlines.

“Reserve component commanders are working through a deliberate process in as few as two days per month with geographically dispersed Soldiers to ensure they become fully vaccinated,” Bradley says, adding, “Soldiers who continue to refuse the vaccination order without an approved or pending exemption may be subject to additional adverse administrative action, including separation.”

Though constantly in flux, the Reserve in May comprised nearly 180,000 soldiers carrying out missions critical to the movement and mobilization of the entire Army. It declined to comment on if any member has been discharged since the deadline passed or if it has specific plans to do so now.

The National Guard similarly did not have information to release on whether any member of a state Guard had been discharged since the deadline passed. However a spokesman noted the disparate process across the various states’ units that enters into force now, which could take months or a year to identify troops who continue to hold out.

All states and territories, however, would have to single out those who have continued to refuse the vaccine during annual medical checkups, which take place at different times for each of the more than 300,000 Guard troops, says Air Force Maj. Matt Murphy with the National Guard Bureau. Once identified, each unit would then decide what penalties to impose on these troops and how quickly it would execute that bureaucratic process – including potential discharges, which could take months or even a year to complete.

Regardless of the states’ decision, unvaccinated troops are not allowed to participate in federally funded training or exercises, which would count against that service member’s pay and retirement accruals.

Guard leaders have expressed hope that the threat of losing these benefits will goad the remaining holdouts to get a vaccine. Those who miss enough federally organized weekend “drill” events will eventually lose their official proficiencies to carry out missions and will have to be removed from service, they say.

“We’re going to give every soldier every opportunity to get vaccinated and continue their military career,” Lt. Gen. Jon Jensen, director of the Army Guard, told The Associated Press over the weekend. “We’re not giving up on anybody until the separation paperwork is signed and completed.”

All members of the military can request an exemption to receiving the vaccine, including for religious reasons. Sources familiar with those particular requests say some are clearly exploiting the process, using it as a forum to include any scrap of information found on the internet to claim that the vaccines are not necessary or perhaps even harmful.

Spokesmen for the Army Reserve and Guard said they were not aware of any new exemptions granted to their respective forces yet.

The threat of penalties, including discharges, has raised outrage among Republican leaders since Austin first announced the mandates – prompting several governors to pledge almost immediately that they would instruct their respective National Guard units to ignore the orders.

Others more recently have observed that the Army faces massive, troubling shortfalls in its recruitment efforts this fiscal year, meeting 40% of its target so far with only three months left. It has already generated controversy through some of its efforts to address the deficit, including eliminating the requirement for a high school diploma to enlist.

Adding the threat of docked pay and retirement benefits, official reprimands or even discharges for the Guard and Reserve – by design the backup force to the Army’s most critical missions – will compound these existing problems with potential disastrous effects, critics say.

“The Biden Administration is destroying the readiness of our Armed Forces by creating an unnecessary recruiting and retention shortfall, and trying to make up the difference by lowering other crucial education and fitness standards,” Rep. Mike Johnson of Louisiana, the vice chairman of the House Republican Caucus, wrote in a series of tweets in anticipation of the June 30 deadline.

“All of this over an illness that is very, very, very, unlikely to have any significant effect on the young men and women of our military, and a vaccine that lacks long-term data on safety and efficacy for this cohort,” Johnson wrote, citing a frequent talking point for Republican criticism of vaccine mandates that does not address the effect the shots have on preventing accidentally infecting high-risk populations – a central purpose of mass vaccinations.

He concluded, “There is simply no other way around it: Until @SecDef [Austin] withdraws, delays, or modifies the vax mandate, or begins rapidly granting more exemptions, our military will have to continue lowering recruitment standards—degrading the readiness and professionalism of our Armed Forces.”

The CDC recommends COVID-19 vaccines to anyone who is eligible for them. It maintains that Americans are best protected when they are “up to date” on their shots, which include booster doses for certain populations, and that vaccination is the safest strategy for gaining protection against the coronavirus.

Other Republican leaders are issuing new official challenges to Austin’s orders. Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin along with several Republican members of Congress sent a letter to the defense secretary demanding – again – that he lift the mandate.

“A select number of [National Guard members] have made a decision not to get vaccinated and whether that decision is based on sincerely held religious beliefs, their own medical choices, or another matter of conscience, our nation should respect and accommodate it,” they wrote, according to a copy of the letter obtained by Hampton, Virginia-based 13 News Now.

They claim the mandates clash with the latest science from the CDC, which acknowledges that natural immunity from a prior infection “provides substantially similar protections” to vaccines.

“These guardsmen deserve the opportunity to continue to serve, and we need them,” they wrote.

Several military officials argue these claims are unrelated to the realities of the missions they face.

“Soldiers and airmen have medical requirements for readiness,” Murphy with the National Guard Bureau says. “In my opinion, they should not be politicized.”

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HEADLINE	07/06 Ukrainians flee homes in historic numbers
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/06/world/russia-ukraine-war-news
GIST	<p>An estimated third of Ukraine’s population has been forced from their homes since Russia invaded in February, including more than 6.27 million people who are displaced inside the country, according to International Organization for Migration data, illustrating the scale of a humanitarian crisis that has gone largely unseen as the war grinds on.</p> <p>The number of internally displaced people dwarfs the 4.8 million Ukrainians who have fled into Europe as refugees, according to the United Nations refugee agency, which has described levels of displacement unseen since World War II.</p>

While large swaths of the country were subject to the brutality of the Russian invasion in its early weeks, most of Ukraine's displaced are now coming from the east, as that region becomes the center of the conflict.

Boarding trains and buses, civilians have poured out of cities and towns across eastern Ukraine, fleeing for the relative safety of the west and the northern capital, Kyiv. Some have left in humanitarian convoys, navigating treacherous roadways amid the threat of gunfire or shelling. Others have left on foot, literally running for their lives.

And as Russian forces now train their artillery on Donetsk Province in the east, aiming to capture all of the industrial Donbas region, more people are being forced from their homes daily. Shellfire by Russian forces killed five civilians in Donetsk in the last 24 hours, the head of the regional military government, Pavlo Kyrylenko, said on Wednesday on the Telegram social messaging app.

For days, Mr. Kyrylenko has advised residents to leave the province, a sign that Ukrainian authorities believe the fighting will escalate. Officials hope to avoid having to attempt large-scale evacuations as in the neighboring province of Luhansk, which fell to the Russians in recent days.

Just three million people have officially been registered as internally displaced, although the true number is believed to be more than double that. A shortfall in international humanitarian support has further strained local resources.

"The state was not ready for such a scale of displaced persons in many areas," Vitaly Muzychenko, the deputy minister of social policy for Ukraine, told a news conference this week, where he announced new plans to register displaced people for state benefits.

This mass displacement has reshaped communities across the country, even those that have been spared the physical devastation of the war. Shelters have sprung up in public buildings, university dorms have been converted and some modular homes have been set up to house the displaced.

The majority of internally displaced people, much like refugees, are women and children, and many face shortages of food, water and basic necessities, [according to U.N. experts](#).

Oksana Zelinska, 40, who was the principal of a preschool in the southern city of Kherson, which is now occupied by Russian forces, fled in April with her two children, a co-worker and that woman's children to the western city of Uzhhorod near the Slovakian border. Her husband has remained behind in Kherson, and she would like to return, but she said she stays in the west for her children.

"When we came here, I needed to do something, it was difficult and I didn't want to sit around getting depressed," she said. "I wanted to be useful."

She began volunteering at the community kitchen that she had used when she first arrived, peeling potatoes and preparing food for the dozens who troop in daily for a hot meal.

Helping the displaced return to their homes — or find new ones — looms as one of Ukraine's greatest challenges, whatever the outcome of the war. Some of their hometowns may not return to Ukrainian control. Others that are retaken could be almost entirely destroyed, with homes, water lines and other vital infrastructure pulverized by the Russian Army's scorched-earth tactics.

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HEADLINE	07/06 Fleeing war-battered east, no turning back
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/06/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#for-many-who-have-fled-ukraines-war-battered-east-there-is-no-turning-back

GIST	<p>When she fled her city in eastern Ukraine, Hanna Obuzhevanna, 71, gave her keys to her neighbor so she could water the cyclamen plants on her balcony. They were in full bloom, and she thought she would be back in few weeks.</p> <p>Three months later, she is still sleeping with her two sons in a room at an old church building near the city of Dnipro in central Ukraine, about 200 miles from home. A missile has wrecked her bedroom, her apartment was sacked, her city, Kreminna, is in Russian hands.</p> <p>“I am sitting in someone else’s damp room. I am wearing someone else’s sweater, the crockery is not mine, I am sleeping on a bed that is not mine. Outside the window all is also foreign. I miss my home so much,” she said in a tearful voice message.</p> <p>“But there is no way I will go back there if there are Russian occupiers.”</p> <p>Ms. Obuzhevanna is among the three million people who have fled the Donbas region, about half of the prewar population, according to Ukrainian officials and international aid groups. In total, more than 10 million Ukrainians have been displaced.</p> <p>When they left, many packed up only their documents and a handful of belongings, thinking they would be back soon. Now, five months into the war, many have started to fear they will never go back.</p> <p>“I will never see anything from my house again,” said Vladislav Obuzhevannyi, Ms. Obuzhevanna’s son, the head of the budgeting department at a pharmaceutical company who lived in the city of Rubizhne, in eastern Ukraine, now in Russian hands. His office was destroyed by Russian artillery and he is haunted by memories of his breakfasts in his bright, warm apartment.</p> <p>“I want to forget better so that the memories don’t hurt me,” he said.</p> <p>Julia Kurilenko left Sloviansk, in eastern Ukraine, in 2014 during the pro-Russian insurgency and returned weeks later. She fled again when Russia invaded in February, assuming that she would stay in western Ukraine for a while, but would again be back soon.</p> <p>Months later, as Russia has intensified its grip on the east, she has realized that will not be the case. “I promised my children that we would come back in one month,” she said, “Now, we realize that my promise was wrong.”</p> <p>She applied for a sponsorship to bring all her family to Britain, which she reached just as Russia began to turn its focus to her region.</p> <p>“We try to find a job,” she said, “and maybe stay for a long time.”</p> <p>Elena Lisura, a Ukrainian refugee in Warsaw wants to return to Ukraine but cannot face the prospect of going home to the ruined southern city of Mariupol, now controlled by Russia and riddled with mass graves.</p> <p>“I don’t want to breathe in the same air with the people who did that to my country,” she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/06 UN: food insecurity, hunger afflicts 2.3B
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/06/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#food-insecurity-and-hunger-afflicted-2-3-billion-people-in-2021-and-the-war-will-add-more-the-un-says
GIST	Global hunger and the chronic inability to access food skyrocketed in 2021, with 2.3 billion people facing moderate or severe food insecurity around the world, the United Nations said in a report released Wednesday .

“The world is moving backward in its efforts to end hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms,” the report said, in part as a result of the war in Ukraine, which is disrupting supply chains and contributing to the rising prices in energy, grain and fertilizers.

Ronald Tran Ba Huy, World Food Program’s deputy director for research assessment, said in a news briefing on Wednesday that prior to the pandemic, 135 million people faced acute food insecurity; before Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, that figure reached 276 million people. The estimated figure for 2022, he said, was 335 million people across 82 countries.

David Beasley, the World Food Program executive director, said at an event for the report’s release that the food crisis caused by the war in Ukraine would push countries into famine, resulting in “global destabilization, starvation and mass migration on an unprecedented scale.”

Russia and Ukraine produce about a third of the world’s supply of wheat and barley, and more than 50 percent of the global supply of sunflower oil. Russia is also a top exporter of fertilizers, oil and gas. The United Nations estimates that about 25 million metric tons of Ukrainian grain are currently trapped in silos because of Russian blockades of seaports in the Black Sea and attacks on railways in Ukraine.

The organization has been trying to broker a “double package” deal that would allow Ukrainian grain to be shipped out to market in exchange for facilitating Russia’s sales of fertilizer.

World leaders have discussed moving the grain by rail from Ukraine to neighboring countries, like [Romania and Belarus](#), and then on to ships in their Black Sea ports, a time-consuming and logistically complicated process. In particular, securing the cooperation of Belarus, a strong ally of Russia, would be difficult.

So far no agreement has materialized.

But the chief economist of the United Nation’s Food and Agriculture Organization, Maximo Torero, told reporters on Wednesday that even if all of Ukraine’s grain was freed immediately, getting it to global markets would not resolve the crisis. Instead, he said, introducing the grains into the market could lead to sudden prices drops that would negatively affect farmers, who have to buy expensive fertilizers.

Mr. Torero said a better plan would be to carefully plan and create an emergency reserve.

The U.N. report, which was prepared by five U.N. agencies, recommended that governments overhaul agricultural policies and reallocate the \$630 million that is collectively spent every year on food and agriculture to reduce the cost of nutritious food and make healthy diets more affordable and available.

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HEADLINE	07/06 Russian official threatens US ‘wrath of God’
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/06/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#a-top-russian-official-threatens-the-wrath-of-god-in-response-to-war-crime-investigations
GIST	<p>One of Russia’s leading political figures on Wednesday rattled his country’s nuclear capabilities and threatened the United States with the “wrath of God” for pursuing war crimes investigations against Russia.</p> <p>In a message posted to Telegram, the official, Dmitri Medvedev, said: “The idea of punishing a country that has one of the largest nuclear potentials is absurd. And potentially poses a threat to the existence of humanity.”</p> <p>He also called the United States hypocritical for accusing Russia of war crimes, denouncing “all American history” as “a bloody war of annihilation.” He listed the subjugation of Native Americans and the dropping of nuclear bombs on Japan as examples.</p>

“Who has answered for this crime?” Mr. Medvedev asked about the war in Vietnam. “What tribunal condemned the sea of blood spilled by the U.S. there and elsewhere?”

Russia has previously [rejected](#) evidence of atrocities committed by its troops in Ukraine, notably in the Kyiv suburb of [Bucha](#). President Vladimir V. Putin, to whom Mr. Medvedev is closely allied, has [blamed](#) Russia’s invasion on provocations by the United States, NATO and “Nazis” in Ukraine.

Mr. Medvedev did not refer to any specific recent event as prompting his message. The prospect of trying Russian officials as war criminals has been raised by a number of countries and international organizations.

In March, President Biden and his secretary of state, Antony J. Blinken, both [accused Mr. Putin of committing war crimes](#). Last month, during a visit to Ukraine, Attorney General Merrick B. Garland [announced](#) the formation of a “war crimes accountability team” focused on Ukraine.

“There is no hiding place for war criminals,” Mr. Garland said.

In May, the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Karim A.A. Khan, deployed what he [described](#) as the largest team of investigators and forensic experts in the history of his office. The European Union [pledged](#) millions of dollars to support the effort last month, but Russia, like the United States, is not a member of the court.

Russian officials and the leaders of liberal democracies, particularly the United States, have used increasingly vehement language to describe opposing worldviews during the war in Ukraine.

Mr. Medvedev embodies that condemnatory style. During his tenure as president of Russia from 2008 to 2012 — when Mr. Putin, blocked from the role by term limits, served as prime minister — Mr. Medvedev met with human rights groups and oppositional journalists, [establishing](#) a reputation for holding liberal sympathies, even if hesitantly or only rhetorically.

Now, as vice chairman of Russia’s Security Council, he [promotes fiery nationalism](#) on his Telegram channel. The dehumanizing rhetoric of his latest message included a reference to Americans as “rotten dogs of war.”

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HEADLINE	07/06 Russian bloggers: complete Ukraine defeat
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/06/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#russian-war-bloggers-see-a-complete-defeat-for-ukraine-in-luhansk-but-some-are-skeptical
GIST	<p>Pro-Russia war bloggers and commentators are celebrating the capture of Ukraine’s Luhansk region, with some seeing a sign that Russia’s momentum might accelerate. Others, however, are more skeptical, arguing that troops might be exhausted after weeks of intense fighting.</p> <p>“The Ukrainian army has suffered a complete defeat,” commentator Yury Podolyaka declared on his Telegram channel, which has 2.2 million subscribers. In his daily video overview of the war, which he has claimed since the outset that Russia would win, he called for Russian forces to remain on the offensive after capturing the city of Lysychansk on Saturday.</p> <p>“Today it is important to keep up the pace before the enemy has come to its senses, while it is still disheveled and hasn’t regrouped,” said Mr. Podolyaka, a native of Ukraine’s Sumy region. “We need to finish it up.”</p> <p>Bloggers like Mr. Podolyaka have emerged as an influential group in Russia since the early days of the invasion in February, especially with independent reporting on the conflict in effect outlawed. Often using Telegram, a social messaging app, they have accumulated large numbers of subscribers with nationalistic</p>

but often critical commentary on the Russian war effort, especially in the early weeks, when its advances in Ukraine were stalled or repelled.

Igor Girkin, a retired Russian commander and [one of the instigators](#) of the separatist rebellion in eastern Ukraine in 2014, has criticized the Russian strategy in Luhansk in his posts.

The Russian troops, Mr. Girkin [said](#), allowed most of the Ukrainian troops defending Lysychansk to escape. In other areas, the long battle for the Luhansk region gave the Ukrainians precious time to regroup and rearm in other areas, Mr. Girkin said. He also argued that Russia needs a larger army and must place its economy on a war footing in order to achieve its objectives in Ukraine.

“If we drag out general mobilization in Russia for longer, we can face a crisis in various areas of the Ukrainian front line,” he said, adding that Russian troops would not be able to fulfill the Kremlin’s objectives at their current levels.

Many pro-war bloggers agreed, however, that the Russian offensive in Ukraine must maintain ambitious goals. For Mr. Girkin, the only successful outcome would be if Russia captures most of Ukraine’s southeast and the government in Kyiv capitulates.

On Monday, President Vladimir V. Putin ordered that the troops involved in the Lysychansk offensive be given some rest to “increase their combat readiness,” while others should continue fighting. However, many bloggers said that the pause should not take too long, and that Russian forces should quickly train their sights on capturing the entire Donetsk, the province southwest of Luhansk.

“The main task today is to finish the enemy and advance toward Kramatorsk and Sloviansk,” Mr. Podolyaka said, referring to two key cities in Donetsk.

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HEADLINE	07/06 Inquest: Charleena Lyles shooting justified
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Inquest-Seattle-police-shooting-of-pregnant-17288965.php
GIST	<p>SEATTLE (AP) — An inquest jury found Wednesday that two Seattle police officers were justified in fatally shooting a mentally unstable, pregnant, Black mother of four children inside her apartment when she menaced them with knives in 2017.</p> <p>The six King County coroner's inquest jurors unanimously determined that officers Jason Anderson and Steven McNew, who are white, had no reasonable alternative to using deadly force. The findings drew an angry outburst from Lyles' father, who shouted profanities and yelled, “You killed my daughter!”</p> <p>The officers testified that Lyles, who had threatened other officers with shears two weeks earlier and spoke of morphing into a wolf, had been calmly speaking with them after calling to report a purported burglary when she suddenly lunged at one with a knife.</p> <p>As the officers drew their weapons, Lyles yelled “Do it!” and cursed at them. The officers repeatedly yelled for her to get back before firing, hitting her seven times. The jury found that even if the officers had a Taser, it would not have been an effective or appropriate option as she advanced on them in the close confines of the apartment, The Seattle Times reported.</p> <p>Her crying baby crawled over and climbed on top of her as she died, and a boy came out of a bedroom and said, in tears, “You shot my mother,” the officers recalled in emotional testimony.</p> <p>Lyles was 15 weeks pregnant.</p> <p>King County Prosecutor Dan Satterberg issued a statement saying he would review the evidence presented at the inquest as well as the findings in deciding whether to press charges against the officers.</p>

“Charleena Lyles’ death is a tragedy,” Satterberg said. “Details of the incident shared at the inquest are heartbreaking.”

Her death unleashed a storm of public protest and has been held up by advocates of police reforms as demonstrating unnecessary police violence and institutional racism by law enforcement.

Family members questioned why the officers, who had been trained to deal with people showing signs of mental illness or other behavior crises, didn’t use nonlethal methods to subdue her. Anderson did not have his Taser with him — the battery was dead — and he was later suspended for two days without pay for violating department policy.

Under questioning from the family's lawyer, Karen Koehler, a Seattle police detective who helped review the shooting acknowledged that the officers had made no plan for dealing with Lyles aside from not allowing her to get behind them.

The family last year settled a civil lawsuit against the officers and the Seattle Police Department for \$3.5 million.

The inquest began after a years-long delay prompted by revisions to the coroner's inquest process. It included six days of testimony. The jurors were asked to consider Lyles' death in light of the police deadly force law that was in effect in 2017, which requires a finding of “actual malice” by the officer — a standard that was changed in 2018 by voter approval of Initiative 940, after prosecutors and lawmakers concluded it was virtually impossible to meet that standard to charge an officer with murder.

An inquest jury can determine if law enforcement violated any policies and potentially any criminal laws. But any decision to charge a police officer is made by the King County prosecutor.

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HEADLINE	07/06 King, Pierce county home prices fall
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/real-estate/king-county-home-prices-fall-6-as-sellers-come-back-down-to-earth/
GIST	<p>The Seattle-area housing market is offering homebuyers new leverage and, in some cases, cheaper prices.</p> <p>More houses are sitting on the market, fewer people are buying homes and home prices in some areas are dropping, according to new data released Wednesday by the Northwest Multiple Listing Service. Townhome developers and swanky condo towers are offering discounts. Some home-shoppers are holding off because of rising mortgage rates or tanking stock portfolios. Others have been priced out.</p> <p>The trends point to a cool-down that isn’t yet a buyers’ market, but is taking some power back from sellers.</p> <p>For Constance Winstead, the recent notice of a nearly \$400 rent increase for her Tacoma apartment was the “final straw.”</p> <p>“I have to make a choice here,” she thought, and began looking for a home to buy.</p> <p>Her search started like so many others in the overheated pandemic housing market, with high prices and bidding wars.</p> <p>But in recent months, things began to go her way.</p> <p>After planning to buy one home, she backed out when an inspection revealed the house needed extensive work. She secured a two-bedroom Tacoma condo in June, had it inspected and got \$2,000 from the seller to improve the carpet.</p>

With interest rates climbing, Winstead worried about her mortgage payments, but “at least I could build some equity,” she said.

The kind of leverage allowing buyers like Winstead to negotiate with sellers — almost unheard of in the market frenzy of the last two years — is the latest sign that the local housing market is cooling.

“Sellers are more realistic and willing to work with buyers,” said Margo Wheeler-Willis, a John L. Scott agent in Tacoma who worked with Winstead.

In King, Pierce and Kitsap counties, twice as many homes were still for sale at the end of June than at the same time last year. In Snohomish, more than three times as many homes were for sale. Across all 26 counties the NWMLS covers, the number of homes and condos still listed for sale at the end of the month was the highest since October 2019.

The slowdown is beginning to affect single-family home prices. The median home price in King County, which reflect sales that closed in June, is down 6% from May.

Prices typically dip in the summer, but the recent change is especially apparent on the Eastside, where the median sale price dropped 13% in the last two months, compared to 2% in Seattle. The number of pending sales on the Eastside is down 45% from the same time last year, compared to 34% in Seattle.

In the Tacoma area, Wheeler-Willis has seen some recent buyers make their purchase contingent on selling their previous home, another protection that nearly disappeared in recent years. “The market has swung somewhat,” she said.

Still, prices are up from last year.

In King County, the median home price of \$938,225 is up 9% from June 2021. In Snohomish County, the \$799,950 median is up 12%. In Pierce County, the median of \$568,575 is up 10%. And in Kitsap County, the median of \$600,000 is up 18%.

It would take more than a month to sell through the current inventory across the Puget Sound region, according to a measure known as months of inventory. That’s still far below the four-to-six months the listing service considers balanced, but the highest level since soon after the pandemic hit.

“For buyers, there’s a lot more breathing room,” said Andrea Keyes, a RE/MAX agent who works with buyers and sellers in Kitsap County. “They don’t feel like they have to make a decision on putting in an offer on a house in a 15- or 30-minute showing. I can show them several homes in a day. And they can think about it overnight.”

Sellers are coming to grips with the shift, too. In May, sellers dropped prices on 27% of listings in Seattle, 48% in Tacoma, 54% in Everett and 36% in Bremerton, according to Redfin. (June data is not yet available.)

Some homeowners “think they’re still in the market that we had as late as February, March and April of this year, which it isn’t,” Keyes said. “It’s evidence of sellers coming back down to Earth.”

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HEADLINE	07/06 Mask recommendations for more counties
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/cdc-mask-wearing-recommended-in-growing-number-of-counties/
GIST	PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — People in 24 Oregon counties — including the county around Portland — and 15 counties in Washington state should resume mask-wearing indoors in public and on public transportation, according to recommendations from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Data from the CDC shows the counties are considered high risk for COVID-19 infection, KPTV reported. The Oregon counties include: Clatsop, Tillamook, Lincoln, Lane, Douglas, Josephine, Jackson, Klamath, Lake, Deschutes, Crook, Jefferson, Wasco, Sherman, Hood River, Clackamas, Washington, Multnomah, Morrow, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, Baker, and Malheur counties.

In Washington, the counties at high risk include: Clallam, Grays Harbor, Pacific, Lewis, Thurston, Pierce, Chelan, Douglas, Grant, Walla Walla, Columbia, Asotin, Lincoln, Ferry and Spokane. That's an increase from six Washington counties at high risk as of June 23.

The most recent community levels were calculated June 30.

High risk means the counties have had 200 or more new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 people in the last seven days, or they've had more than 20 new COVID-19 hospital admissions per 100,000 people within a seven-day period.

Dr. Jeff Duchin, health officer at Public Health – Seattle & King County, said on Twitter Sunday that since April, the health agency has recommended that people wear high-quality masks in indoor public spaces, that people get all recommended COVID-19 vaccines and booster doses, and that indoor air quality should be improved and outdoor venues be prioritized.

Duchin said vaccines are working well to halt hospitalizations and death but infections and reinfections are more common with the new variants. The virus has evolved to be more contagious.

Emerging research suggests reinfections could put people at higher risk for health problems.

Unvaccinated people have a six times higher risk of dying from COVID-19 compared with people with at least a primary series of shots, the CDC estimated based on available data from April.

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HEADLINE	07/06 Seattle Public Library reduces hours
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/entertainment/books/seattle-public-library-temporarily-reduces-hours-due-to-staff-shortages/
GIST	<p>The Seattle Public Library this week temporarily reduced operational hours across its branches primarily due to ongoing staff shortages caused by COVID-19. The library system hopes to return to its regular schedule this fall.</p> <p>Of the 27 SPL branches, the flagship Central Library and 14 neighborhood libraries will continue to operate seven days a week, while the remaining 12 locations will be open five or six days weekly, including at least one day on weekends. Hours vary by day and location, and a full list of each location's hours can be found at st.news/SPL-hours.</p> <p>Seattle Public Library “has worked diligently over the last year to increase staffing levels and open hours,” wrote Andrew Harbison, interim director of Library Programs & Services, in a news release announcing the reduced hours.</p> <p>But “the ongoing surges and challenges of COVID-19 have taken a toll on library workers and are impacting the library’s ability to consistently staff each building at pre-pandemic levels,” he wrote. The goal for this schedule change is to bring “stability” to library operations.</p> <p>The library has reduced and expanded its hours several times in response to the pandemic. SPL closed all branches March 13, 2020, reopening some branches for in-person services starting April 27, 2021. All branches opened by October and most were restored to normal hours in December. The library again reduced hours in January in response to the omicron coronavirus variant before extending hours in March.</p>

There were 46 new COVID-19 cases among library staff from May 1-17 and 37 cases from May 29-June 25, said SPL communications strategist Elisa Murray. Approximately 8% of the library's 650 total employees had to take time off during that time period.

Seattle Public Library employees are required to quarantine for 10 days after a positive test. The uptick in unexpected time off leaves libraries struggling to maintain the minimum number of employees required to stay open.

"In some cases, we've had to unexpectedly close locations for a day," Murray said. "Hopefully, through the summer, we can begin to stabilize our library operations so that people have really predictable open hours for each neighborhood."

SPL staff members are vaccinated, wear masks in public areas and provide free masks to library patrons, who are encouraged but not required to wear masks.

The minimum number of employees required to run a library depends on the size of the branch. Even the smaller branches need at least three members, Murray said. At least one SPL employee on duty must be trained to operate safety and security systems, and to implement emergency response procedures and de-escalation training.

While Murray said she hopes Seattle Public Library will be expand hours again in September, she can't predict how the pandemic will impact those plans.

In the event of another [heat wave, like the one that hit the Pacific Northwest last summer](#), there are 19 air-conditioned library locations where people can seek shelter from the heat. A list of those locations can be found at spl.org/shelter. Murray said library personnel are looking to install air-conditioning in the remaining branches, too.

Despite the reduction of hours, the library's online system, including e-book checkouts, tutoring and job help, remain fully operational. Summer programs like Summer of Learning and [Summer Book Bingo](#) will also still be offered [online](#) and at physical locations.

"We do have physical buildings, but we offer many services beyond the physical buildings," Murray said.

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HEADLINE	07/06 King Co. officials: monkeypox spreading
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/monkeypox-likely-spreading-locally-king-county-health-officials-confirm/
GIST	<p>The monkeypox virus continues to circulate in King County and is now likely spreading between residents, local health officials confirmed Wednesday morning.</p> <p>As of this week, public health leaders have identified nine King County infections — a little over a month since the first case was found in Washington state and confirmed in a King County man in late May. While the virus is rarely identified outside Africa, about 7,000 cases have been detected globally in the recent outbreak, including about 560 in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>Because recent cases of monkeypox have been identified in King County residents who did not travel during the time they would have been exposed, local transmission is likely, King County health officer Dr. Jeff Duchin said in a statement.</p> <p>"Finding monkeypox in residents who were likely exposed locally highlights the importance for people who are at higher risk for monkeypox and for health care providers to be able to recognize the symptoms promptly, and to take steps to limit the risk for infection and the spread to others," Duchin said. "We expect to see additional cases locally as the outbreak grows in the U.S. and globally."</p>

One of the nine King County residents infected was hospitalized but has since been released, Public Health – Seattle & King County spokesperson Sharon Bogan said in an email.

No further information was immediately available about the people who have been infected or the severity of their illnesses.

Public Health – Seattle & King County urged anyone with a new rash to visit a health care provider for an assessment, noting that people should also be aware the rate of syphilis is rising in King County and nationally.

“In the current outbreak, people have presented with skin lesions that may resemble common sexually transmitted infection such as herpes or syphilis,” Duchin said. “Some cases are more subtle and might be missed if people aren’t looking for them.”

Infections that have emerged from the recent global outbreak are rarely fatal, though at least one patient in Nigeria has died from the virus, according to the latest update from the World Health Organization. According to the update, the majority of global laboratory-confirmed cases have been detected in Europe, with particularly large outbreaks in the United Kingdom, Spain, Germany and Portugal.

While the spread of monkeypox — also related to the virus that causes smallpox — in the U.S. and Europe is unusual, researchers have anticipated more frequent global outbreaks for years, said Heather Koehler, an assistant professor in molecular biosciences at Washington State University.

“Prior to this point, our population was protected against monkeypox because most of the prior generation was vaccinated for smallpox,” said Koehler, who studies monkeypox in her lab. “Now that our population is becoming less and less immune-privileged, we’re going to see it increase the susceptibility within our general population regardless of area.”

People who get sick with monkeypox commonly experience flu-like symptoms, including a fever, headache, muscle aches, swollen lymph nodes and exhaustion, according to local health officials. Most people also develop a painful rash.

Unlike the coronavirus, monkeypox does not spread through the air over longer distances, among other differences. Monkeypox is primarily spread through large droplets or the exchange of bodily fluids.

While most patients recover in two to four weeks, according to Public Health -Seattle & King County, the disease can be particularly serious for children or those who are immunocompromised, have a history of eczema or who are pregnant.

While no specific treatments are currently widely available for a monkeypox infection, the CDC is focusing on distributing the Jynneos vaccine. It has FDA approval to prevent smallpox and monkeypox, controlling the spread of the virus, the statement said.

The CDC recommends the vaccine be given within four days of exposure for the best chance of preventing severe disease. If given between four and 14 days after exposure, vaccination might reduce severity of the disease but might not prevent infection, according to public health officials.

While the national supply of monkeypox vaccine is limited, the federal government last week ordered 2.5 million more doses of the vaccine, which are expected to arrive later this year.

In King County, health officials are expecting about 500 vaccine doses from the state Department of Health, which is distributing shots throughout the state.

More information about the virus and its risk factors are available at Public Health – Seattle & King County’s news website.

	<p>“When we think about what our reaction should be, it should be based off a respect that viruses are in our population,” Koehler said. “We’re never going to get away from viruses causing disease in humans. ... But don’t be afraid. Be alert. And be respectful of the virus.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/06 Gas sales drop, lifestyles change
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/wa-gas-sales-drop-lifestyles-change-amid-high-prices/
GIST	<p>Washington drivers are buying less gasoline, likely the result of eye-popping prices, a shift in work habits, a growing interest in alternative-fuel cars and, for some, a small effort to reduce their carbon footprint.</p> <p>This state is not alone, according to an analysis of data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration, compiled by QuoteWizard, which typically compares insurance rates. Nationwide, gas consumption is down in nearly every state, with few exceptions. The 10,500 fewer gallons of gas being used per day would allow a car to drive around the Earth 260 times.</p> <p>“We’re at the same levels we were at in the mid-1990s,” said Nick VinZant, an analyst with QuoteWizard. “It’s part of a fundamental shift in society, but it’s also a direct response to gas prices at the same time.”</p> <p>The data since 2020 is messy. Washingtonians’ fuel consumption fell in early 2020 to its lowest level in nearly 40 years. The reason, of course, was not fuel prices, but pandemic lockdowns.</p> <p>Additionally, people have always driven less in the winter than in the summer, meaning month-to-month comparisons are not direct.</p> <p>But 2022 consumption, while still higher than in the earliest days of the pandemic, is trending down after months of doing the opposite. Last summer and early fall, when gas prices were still manageable, fuel consumption in Washington state had nearly returned to pre-pandemic levels; September 2021 fuel use was higher than in September 2019.</p> <p>In October, gas sales began to slip again. By March of this year, drivers bought less gasoline than they had in the same month last year – the first time in a year that had occurred. Excluding 2020, the 6,740,000 gallons purchased in March in Washington is the lowest since January 1998; the March level hasn’t been that low since 1992.</p> <p>Tyler Boucher and his family recently moved from South Seattle to Ravenna. He and his partner had talked for a long time about weaning themselves off their cars. At the time, the motivation for Boucher was less about the price of gas and more about a desire to tread more lightly on the environment.</p> <p>They considered buying an electric vehicle, but instead decided to invest in an electric cargo bike. They made the purchase in April, as gas prices climbed even higher. Even with twin boys and a cold and wet spring, the investment has paid off, Boucher said. He does almost all his errands by bike.</p> <p>“We were previously using the car most days to do something and now we’re not using it most days,” said Boucher, a freelance writer and editor. Although they haven’t sold either of their cars yet, he estimated they’re buying just one tank of gas a month, for weekend trips — a major help with their finances.</p> <p>James Emery, an engineer who lives in Kirkland, started biking more last October. Recently, he’s tried to make a more conscious shift away from driving. Both he and his partner have cars, and he calculated he was spending thousands of dollars on maintenance and insurance, in addition to gas.</p>

“Over the last few months, since I’ve had some expensive car bills and gas has gotten more expensive, I’ve started thinking very strongly about getting rid of my car,” Emery said. “We have two cars and I use mine once a week. It just doesn’t make financial sense.”

In the same period, local transit has begun to show signs of modest recovery. King County Metro topped 200,000 average daily riders in April for the first time since before the pandemic. April was also Sound Transit’s best month since February 2020. Ridership is still well below 2019 numbers, but the trend is positive, said Kirk Hovenkotter, executive director of Commute Seattle.

“We’ve seen people getting back on the bus as the weather is nicer and gas prices hit their pocketbook,” he said. In 2022 so far, Seattle employers have issued 70% more new ORCA cards than during the same period last year, Hovenkotter said.

VinZant of QuoteWizard said he’s noticed an increased interest in electric and alternative-fuel vehicles as well. That’s especially true in Washington, where internet searches for electric vehicles have increased significantly in 2022, he said.

The Legislature this year announced a goal of phasing out sales of new gas-powered cars by 2030.

The Energy Information Administration’s data on diesel consumption is lacking. But Sheri Call, president and CEO of the Washington Trucking Association, said she wouldn’t expect a similar drop-off. Anything that can be done to improve fuel-efficiency in the freight world is already being done, she said. So rather than truckers driving less, products become more expensive.

“We’re not out there for our pleasure,” she said. “We’re responding to a demand.”

The average price of a gallon of gas in Washington was \$5.45 on Tuesday, according to AAA, a slight dip from the previous week’s average. Fuel prices nationwide have decreased by about 15 cents a gallon over the last two weeks, a small reprieve.

VinZant said he’d expect gasoline sales to correlate to prices, meaning if supplies increased and prices dropped, sales likely would increase, too. At the same time, he believes some drivers may permanently shift their habits. That’s probably more true in places like Seattle, where there are transit options and people are more likely to live near their work. In places like Texas or Idaho, he’s less sure. People in some rural states, such as North Dakota, are buying more gasoline than the year before.

Emery, of Kirkland, said he doesn’t expect to return to driving, at least not in the same way. “For me, it’ll be permanent,” he said. “I want to use this as an opportunity to stick, even if [gas] does get cheaper.”

For Boucher, there’s an added benefit: “It’s really fun to go on a bike ride when the rest of the world is falling apart.”

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HEADLINE	07/06 White supremacist music festival in Boise
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/white-nationalist-music-festival-planned-for-boise-this-weekend-poster-shows/
GIST	<p>A music festival organized by a white supremacist group and featuring bands that reference Nazi history will take place in Boise this weekend, according to an event poster shared on social media.</p> <p>The event, called “Hills of Hate Camp,” will be held in Boise on Saturday, the poster showed. The poster was shared on Telegram, a social media site, in a group promoting white nationalism in the Pacific Northwest. The group has called itself the “Pacific Northwest Territorial Imperative.”</p>

It was also [shared on Twitter](#) by Redoubt Antifascists, an anonymous group that calls out extremism in the region.

According to the poster, the festival will be held by Northwest Hammerskins and Crew 38, off-shoots of the Hammerskin Nation, which is considered “the most violent and best-organized neo-Nazi skinhead group in the United States” [by the Anti-Defamation League](#). The Anti-Defamation League identifies the national group as a white supremacist group.

The poster advertised an unnamed “special guest speaker,” as well as three bands — Beer Hall Putsch, 13 Knots and Ironwill — with ties to white supremacy. Beer Hall Putsch refers to [a failed 1923 Nazi coup attempt](#) that sent Adolf Hitler to prison, where he wrote “Mein Kampf.” 13 Knots has released music under Wewelsburg Records, a German label affiliated with the white power [Rock Against Communism movement](#). Ironwill has released music under the [white power record label Label 56](#).

The exact location of the event was excluded on the poster. A user on Telegram invited others to message them privately for more details.

The event has been held in Boise before — [in 2012](#) and again in 2017, when Canyon County officials [told the Idaho Statesman](#) the event took place not in Boise but on private property near Melba. According to previous Statesman reporting, law enforcement reported no issues during the 2017 event.

The Statesman has reached out to the Boise Police Department and Canyon County Sheriff’s Office to see if they’re monitoring Saturday’s gathering.

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HEADLINE	07/07 Beijing: vax proof for some public spaces
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/beijing-mandates-covid-vaccines-to-enter-some-public-spaces/
GIST	<p>TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — The Chinese capital has issued a mandate requiring people to show proof of COVID-19 vaccination before they can enter some public spaces including gyms, museums and libraries, with exceptions only available to those who cannot be vaccinated for health reasons.</p> <p>The health app that shows a person’s latest PCR test results has been updated to make it easier to access their vaccination status, according to Li Ang, a spokesperson at Beijing’s municipal health commission.</p> <p>The list of public places requiring vaccination does not include restaurants and offices. The mandate will go into effect on Monday.</p> <p>“In the normalization of COVID-19 pandemic controls, getting vaccinated is still the most effective measure at controlling the spread of COVID-19,” Li said in an announcement on Wednesday.</p> <p>More than 23 million people in Beijing have been vaccinated, Li said, which if accurate would cover the city’s entire population and more. A 2020 census found that Beijing was home to some 22 million long-term residents. It is unclear what makes up the discrepancy in the numbers. The Beijing government did not immediately respond to a faxed request for comment on the new measures.</p> <p>Li said that more than 3.6 million people over 60 years old have been vaccinated. He did not say if they received two shots or three.</p> <p>A vaccine mandate is not unusual and some major cities in the U.S. required proof of vaccination for entry into restaurants and bars at some point during the pandemic.</p> <p>However, those mandates did not include spaces like libraries. Few places in the U.S. now actively require proof of vaccination to enter. Most U.S. cities have also rolled back social distancing measures that were</p>

implemented in the first year of the pandemic. Certain spaces, like hospitals, still mandate proof of vaccination.

In Beijing and other cities across China, many government facilities already require people to show proof of vaccination before entry.

Online, the announcement drew some anger and pointed questions. Social media users questioned how to obtain a certificate showing one was unsuitable for vaccination, whether the unvaccinated could ride the subway and other logistics of the new requirement.

Chen Yumei, a 48-year-old Beijing resident, said she hasn't been vaccinated yet because she suffered from hives that doctors had said made her unsuitable.

"A lot of doctors told me I couldn't, but who's going to give me the certification for an exception? No one dares to give you this certification," she said.

"Something like this is too unreasonable," Chen said. "We've already been cooperating with the PCR tests, no matter how hot it is or how long the line is."

Another Beijing resident, Leo Zhang, said he was confused whether the new policy meant he needed to get a booster or if two doses were enough. He is planning to get a booster shot as a result.

"At least for me, it doesn't have a big impact, it's just getting a booster," said Zhang, who regularly visits the gym.

Others on social media shared an article from last year from Xinhua, an official state media outlet, that quoted National Health Commission officials forbidding local governments from putting forward policies that prevent people from entering places like supermarkets without proof of vaccination.

It is unclear how Beijing's new directive will be implemented given the national policy. Additional requirements are already in effect for medical workers, delivery workers and public transportation employees, who are all required to be fully vaccinated.

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HEADLINE	07/07 WHO: Europe center of new Covid wave
SOURCE	https://www.scmp.com/news/world/europe/article/3184382/covid-19-cases-30-cent-2-weeks-europe-centre-new-wave-who-says
GIST	<p>Europe is at the centre of a resurgence in Covid-19 infections as more people mix at large-scale events and travel, according to the World Health Organization.</p> <p>"We are seeing a much more intense wave of the disease passing through Europe again," Michael Ryan, executive director of the WHO's Health Emergencies Programme, said at a media briefing on Wednesday.</p> <p>"And we will see it happen elsewhere – we are already seeing it in Southeast Asia and in the eastern Mediterranean region as well."</p> <p>Overall, the number of Covid-19 infections rose 30 per cent globally in the past two weeks, with the Omicron subvariants BA.4 and BA.5 driving the increase in Europe and the US. The agency said it was also following a new sublineage of subvariant BA.2.75 which had been detected in India.</p> <p>The increase in cases in Europe during the summer – when transmission should be more difficult because people are outside – results from people swapping one kind of mixing for another, such as attending large concerts and travelling more, Ryan said.</p>

	<p>The new wave of infections is not yet leading to a surge in intensive-care admissions or a serious increase in the number of deaths, as a result of vaccine protection.</p> <p>Last week Britain reported a 32 per cent rise in infections and said that hospital admissions are climbing, with intensive-care cases spreading among older age groups. The rise in hospitalisations is still far below previous waves, and widespread vaccination has made the pandemic far less deadly.</p> <p>The WHO said countries should ensure their “immunological walls” remained strong, providing booster shots as necessary to vulnerable individuals, maintaining surveillance measures, introducing antivirals and using tried and tested countermeasures to reduce the chances for transmission.</p> <p>Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that while any resurgence in cases has to be taken seriously, the world is in a better situation to fight the virus now than it was back in 2020 when it started to sweep around the world.</p> <p>“We won’t be the hostage of the virus like we have in the past two years,” he said at the briefing. “We know the virus, we have better tools to fight it.”</p> <p>Separately, Tedros said the organisation remained concerned about the spread of monkeypox – with more than 6,000 cases in 58 countries – and will reconvene the agency’s emergency committee within the next three weeks to determine if the outbreak should be considered a public health emergency of international concern.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/07 Plight of individuals vs. American interests
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/07/07/politics/griner-whelan-russia-biden-analysis/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)President Joe Biden is in a tightening vise between increasingly fretful families of Americans imprisoned in Russia and Vladimir Putin -- a leader who has few scruples about using civilians to grind out his political goals.</p> <p>Biden is facing rising pressure from relatives of WNBA star Brittney Griner and ex-US Marine Paul Whelan, who are frustrated at his failure to bring them home and have questioned whether their fates have his personal attention.</p> <p>But the White House's response is only deepening his political discomfort. After Biden on Wednesday phoned Griner's wife Cherelle and responded to a letter from the basketball player, Whelan's sister said she was "astonished" her brother did not get similar treatment.</p> <p>The situation has become yet another crisis bearing down on the White House and testing its sometimes faltering public messaging machine ahead of midterm elections that are likely to be, in part, a referendum on Biden's presidency.</p> <p>As the political heat rises on the President, US leverage needed to free the pair is compromised by antagonistic relations between Moscow and Washington, leaving them essentially political pawns caught in a wider geopolitical trap. Given the aftershocks of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the relentless US campaign to isolate and punish the Kremlin, there may never have been a worse time to be an American imprisoned in Russia.</p> <p>Griner was arrested in February at a Moscow airport one week before the invasion and after playing in Moscow during the WNBA off-season. Russian authorities claimed she had cannabis oil in her luggage and accused her of smuggling significant amounts of a narcotic substance, an offense punishable by up to 10 years in prison. Her trial is expected to resume this week.</p>

Whelan was arrested in 2018 on espionage charges, which he has denied. He was convicted and sentenced in June 2020 to 16 years in prison in a trial US officials denounced as unfair. He has also questioned whether the Biden White House has been doing everything it can to free him.

Washington says both Americans were wrongfully imprisoned.

While the anguish of Griner and Whelan and their families is justified, raising the public profile of their cases is risky. They're trying to prod the administration into urgent action, but signs of rising public pressure on Biden are sure to be reported to Putin and his subordinates by Russian diplomats. This could not only complicate the administration's effort to wall off the fate of the US prisoners from the wider menu of grievances that have shattered US dialogue with Russia; it could also embolden a Russian leader, whom Biden has dubbed a "butcher," keen to lash out over US sanctions and military aid to Ukraine. It could also up the price for any eventual deal between the US and Russia that wins the release of the Americans -- perhaps on the lines of the Cold War-style prisoner swap that freed a sick American, [Trevor Reed](#), in April.

The plight of individuals vs. American interests

In the United States, the plight of Griner, especially, is being viewed through a humanitarian lens. And for loved-ones of those in prison, almost any step to bring them home would be viewed as a small price to pay.

But the White House and the State Department must also guard against signaling to US adversaries like Russia, Iran, China or North Korea, or criminal or terrorist groups, that Washington is open for business for deals to return imprisoned citizens. That would leave all Americans deeply vulnerable when they travel overseas.

Biden's headache over this issues is only getting worse. It's politically problematic any time a president looks unable to dictate terms to strongmen abroad. And given his parlous approval ratings, Biden can ill afford his handling of what is essentially a foreign hostage crisis, offering an opening to his domestic political foes.

The President's political exposure grew significantly in recent days after Griner's camp upped the pressure, including with a letter to the President from the Phoenix Mercury star herself in which she wrote that she feared being in prison in Russia indefinitely. Her wife, Cherelle, questioned in an interview with CNN whether the effort to free her matched US rhetoric.

Later, at a rally in Arizona held by Griner's pro-team and Democratic Rep. Greg Stanton, participants expressed concern about her situation.

"I'm frustrated that my wife is not going to get justice," Cherelle Griner said.

In its rush to make amends with Griner's camp, the administration may have succeeded mostly in ratcheting up the political brouhaha it was trying to tamp down.

Both Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris spoke by phone on Wednesday with Cherelle Griner to assure her they were pursuing every avenue to free her wife. And the President shared with her a reply he had written to the Phoenix Mercury center. But his attention to Griner's case immediately caused friction with the family of Whelan. The ex-Marine's sister told CNN that while they didn't begrudge the Griner family any of the attention, they wondered why there was outreach to some families and not others.

"I was astonished this morning to hear about this call," Elizabeth Whelan told CNN's Erica Hill. "It did make me wonder, should we be pushing for a meeting with the President? What I would really like to see is a functioning process that really didn't require that."

Whelan said that her brother had written hundreds of letters, including to Biden, ex-President Donald Trump and members of Congress. While she said that she believes the US government is doing everything it can to bring her brother home, its outreach to the families was insufficient.

"My message to the White House is that other families with far less resources have been waiting for years and years to see some action to bring their loved ones home. What we need to see is something a little more even handed," she said.

Griner and Whelan are not the only Americans imprisoned abroad. A coalition of relatives involved in the "Bring Our Families Home Campaign" has also called on the President to become more personally involved in their cases. Secretary of State Antony Blinken held a meeting with the families and assured them that the administration was doing everything it could. On Tuesday, State Department spokesman Ned Price spoke of the extreme sensitivity of many of the cases while saying he understood the impulse of families to stir as much publicity as possible.

"We don't, we ourselves, don't want to do anything, don't want to say anything that could jeopardize" the cases of Americans imprisoned abroad, Price said. "We have had conversations with families about how they too could avoid doing anything that would further complicate the release of their loved ones."

The US government is also dealing with cases of two other Americans, [Alexander John-Robert Drueke](#) and Andy Tai Ngoc Huynh, who are being held by the pro-Russia Donetsk People's Republic after being captured fighting for Ukraine.

Bunny Drueke, the mother of one of the men, told CNN's Erin Burnett on Wednesday that she was satisfied with the administration's response.

"I have not heard from President Biden or the White House but I have not expected to; that is not really their responsibility," she said, adding that she was a happy with Blinken's role in the matter, and pointing out that her son and his compatriot were different from Griner since they were prisoners of war.

Sensitive diplomatic maneuvering

The position of Americans who are detained by enemies of the United States is especially difficult. While Washington might want to silo the cases of individuals from complicated geopolitical disputes, adversary governments are bound to try to use them for their own ends.

This is why prisoners like Griner have so few options -- trapped in a country whose leader has shown little compunction about using innocent civilians as chits.

"Really what's happened to Brittney Griner -- she's been kidnapped and she's being held now in exchange for something that Putin wants," Steve Hall, former CIA chief of Russia operations, said last week.

Hall underscored how US negotiations for the release of prisoners overseas would be viewed by the country's enemies. "You're going to incentivize more of this, not just by Russia -- North Korea is a perfect example. These rouge states, these authoritarian states ... know that all they have to do is nab one American -- whether it's a business person, a tourist, a professional, like Griner -- and then they can bargain for whatever it is that they want," said Hall, a CNN national security analyst.

The price that Russia may demand for leniency for such a high-profile figure now may be rising by the day. Moscow would surely like to extract [Viktor Bout](#), a Russian arms dealer known as the "Merchant of Death," from US jail.

But Biden would face significant resistance from leaders inside the criminal justice hierarchy if he offered Bout in a prisoner swap. It would, for one thing, equate the integrity of a US prosecution -- which saw Bout jailed for 25 years for conspiracy to kill Americans, acquiring and exporting anti-aircraft missiles and providing material support to a terrorist organization -- with Russian criminal proceedings that Washington sees as a sham.

Such judicial and geopolitical considerations pale for those Americans whose relatives are imprisoned in often primitive and unhealthy conditions thousands of miles from home. These cases end up on the desks of presidents because they are so intractable and often involve unpalatable trade-offs between humanitarian considerations and national interests.

And every choice a president makes comes with considerable downsides.

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HEADLINE	07/06 Yellowstone adds indoor mask mandate
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/yellowstone-national-park-indoor-mask-mandate-covid-19-cases/
GIST	<p>Yellowstone National Park will now require visitors 2 years and older to wear face masks in its indoor facilities, citing a rise in COVID-19 cases. Several other parks have similar restrictions, and the National Park Service has implemented a mask mandate on public transit in all of its parks.</p> <p>Of the 10 most-visited national parks of 2021, four now have indoor mask requirements: Yellowstone, the Grand Canyon, Yosemite and the Grand Tetons. All visitors must wear a mask, regardless of their vaccination status.</p> <p>The National Park Service says masking requirements vary based on the park and its local COVID conditions. If an area is designated as having a high COVID community level by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the park must enact restrictions. The community level is based on the number of hospital beds being used, hospital admissions and the total number of new cases, the CDC says.</p> <p>According to the Mayo Clinic, Teton County, where the Grand Tetons and portions of Yellowstone are located, has the highest COVID rate in Wyoming. It is reporting an average of 16 cases a day, and there are 70 infections per 100,000 people. Yellowstone spans three states and five counties, three of which have a high COVID community level, according to the CDC.</p> <p>Mariposa County, California, which is home to Yosemite, is seeing one of the state's highest COVID rates, with 53.8 cases per 100,000 people. And Coconino County, where the Grand Canyon is located, is reporting 38.8 cases per 100,000 people, data from the Mayo Clinic shows.</p> <p>Maine's Acadia National Park says face masks are optional, and the Rocky Mountain National Park advised that visitors mask up while on its public transit and in indoor facilities, but it does not have a requirement. The Colorado park spans three counties, one of which has a high COVID community level.</p> <p>Zion, the Great Smoky Mountains, Indiana Dunes and Glacier round out the top 10 most-visited national parks in the U.S. — and they do not, at this time, have any COVID restrictions in place. However, both Zion and Glacier span counties that the CDC says are at a medium COVID community level, suggesting that mask mandates could be enacted if COVID cases continue to rise there.</p> <p>If you are planning to visit a national park this summer, the NPS suggests you visit the park's website to learn more about possible COVID requirements.</p> <p>Yellowstone's announcement comes after a tumultuous start to the summer — and tourist — season. Last month, the park temporarily closed after historic flooding damaged roadways, homes and other structures within the park. Most of the park's entrances have since reopened, but parts of the north loop are still closed. Also, three park visitors have been gored by bison since May, with the latest two incidents happening within three days of each other.</p> <p>Yellowstone is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/06 Experts warn of rising Black youth suicide
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SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/black-children-dying-suicide-doctors-understanding/story?id=85069514
GIST	<p>Quintin Lamarr first began having thoughts of suicide when he was around 16 years old.</p> <p>Now 26 and an advocate and volunteer with the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Lamarr told ABC News that about a year and a half of those suicidal thoughts culminated in a mental health crisis that led to his hospitalization. During that time, he said, he was dealing with continued grief over the death of his father along with more recent bullying he faced as a gay Black teenager growing up in Milwaukee.</p> <p>He didn't find the support he needed at school, he said, and as the only child of a single mother who was busy trying to provide for the household he ended up spending a lot of time alone.</p> <p>"I just felt like I had no community. I had no love. I had no protective energy around me," Lamarr said. "It just felt like 'nobody wants me here.'"</p> <p>His experience is shared, at least in part, by many other young Black people.</p> <p>The suicide rate among Black youth has been increasing along with the number of suicide attempts and the severity of those attempts, according to the most recent Youth Risk Behavior Survey from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, released in 2019.</p> <p>That report, tracking suicide trends among students ages 14-18 over the previous 10 years, found that of the 8.9% who reported attempting suicide, Black youth were among the populations with the highest rates of reporting attempts, accounting for 11.8%. By contrast, white youth accounted for 7.9% of those reported attempts and Hispanic youth accounted for 8.9%.</p> <p>The study found there was an even greater difference in reported attempts by race among female students: Black female students accounted for 15.2% of those reporting attempts, white female students made up 9.4% of that population, and Hispanic female students accounted for 11.9%.</p> <p>A separate report from the American Academy of Pediatrics tracking suicidal behavior in youth from 1991 to 2017 found that Black youth experienced significant increases in suicide attempts over that period. And among Black kids ages 5-12, the suicide rate was found to be twice that of their white counterparts in 2017.</p> <p>"What we've been seeing over time, and it's been over a long period of time, is a significant increase in the number of Black boys dying by suicide," said Dr. Tami D. Benton, psychiatrist-in-chief at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and president-elect of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.</p> <p>Experts told ABC News the disproportionately rising rate has a variety of underlying causes, including lack of access to mental health care, lack of awareness around symptoms of mental illness, social stigma and medical and structural racism.</p> <p>More broadly, experts said, Black children and teenagers deal with some of the same mental health stressors as other young people -- including anxiety and depression -- and see some of the same challenges in getting caregivers to recognize what is really going on.</p> <p>"A lot of people are just now learning that the unfortunate reality for a lot of Black youth is that they are dying," said Dr. Christine Crawford, associate medical director for NAMI. "And a lot of that has to do with the fact that mental health conditions are often underdiagnosed or are not adequately treated for the conditions that they have."</p> <p>Dr. Jeffery Greene, an adolescent medicine specialist at Seattle Children's Hospital, said that while lack of access to care is a contributor, the growing Black youth suicide rate is "multifactorial."</p> <p>"Of course, just the stigma of being labeled as someone with depression or anxiety limits the ability to get patients in to see their provider," Greene said. "The racial injustices in this country over the last few years</p>

becoming so overt has also contributed. And, honestly, my personal feeling is in talking to teenagers, it seems like there's a feeling of lack of hope for the future."

Racism plays a role

Crawford said the utilization of mental health services among Black youth is lower than among other groups. There are several reasons for this, Crawford said, including "clinician bias and racism," which can get in the way of diagnosis and become a barrier to treatment.

Structural and systemic racism also play a role, Crawford explained, as Black youth are more likely to attend schools and live in communities that are under-resourced and unable to provide mental health support.

"We need to acknowledge the fact that racism does lead to some of this and contributes to some of the bias. But that's a hard thing to talk about -- a hard thing for people to accept," Crawford said. "But once people acknowledge the fact that it has an impact on what it is we're seeing in mental health with children, especially Black children, that's the only way that we're able to strive for change."

"We have to recognize the problem in order to adequately solve it and address it," she said.

Racism in daily life also presents complications, with a study from the CDC released earlier this year showing that reports of experiencing racism were higher among students with poor mental health.

"We do know that the trauma that is experienced by racism can certainly result in mental health symptoms," Crawford said. "We do see that people who have experienced various forms of racism, such as microaggressions, such as discrimination, are more likely to experience pretty significant psychological distress."

Lamarr, the advocate, said that the bullying he faced as a boy -- not just for his race but his sexuality -- contributed to his own struggles.

"I've always had insecurities about things, just because growing up -- being dark-skinned, being flamboyant, living in my truth, being part of the LGBT community, you always are criticized," Lamarr said. "There was always a sense that I was holding back or I wasn't always fully myself."

Importance of historical context

In addition to social factors influencing mental health struggles for Black youth, Crawford said, it is possible that their symptoms are dismissed by health care providers.

"There's often a tendency, especially for some white clinicians, to automatically assume that a child is presenting a certain way because they're Black and because they've experienced a lot of trauma. But all of that can be true and they can also be experiencing symptoms of depression," Crawford said. "We need to make sure that we're taking both things into account -- some of the external environmental societal factors that may be exacerbating mood symptoms -- and we also need to know that there are treatments that exist to provide support for depression."

Crawford cites a history in psychiatry of dismissing Black people's mental illness symptoms.

"We do know that depression was a condition that was not diagnosed in Black people because the field didn't think that Black people's minds were sophisticated enough to experience an abstract condition such as depression," she said.

It's important, Crawford said, "to appreciate this historical context and how we're continuing to see the ramifications of all of that in the present day."

Depression can look different in kids

Age as well as race is a factor in mental health -- indeed, the two can intersect. Symptoms of depression can present differently in children, including Black youth, than they do in adults.

Benton, the president-elect of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, explained that most frequently Black children are diagnosed with "externalizing disorders," which are characterized by "acting-out behavior."

"The assumption is not that Black youth can be depressed or suicidal. It's that they tend to act out more than acting on themselves," Benton said. "And that's just not true."

Sometimes depression in children is not recognized by parents because of differing presentation, Crawford explained, and there can be a misconception that depression stems solely from external problems and stressors.

"I try to remind my families, my caregivers, that depression -- major depressive disorder -- is a medical condition," Crawford said. "It doesn't necessarily have to be because something bad happened to you, and therefore you are depressed and therefore you are very sad and crying in the corner."

She said for some people, and especially kids, they feel depressed because "it's a biological condition."

Crawford said that depression for this group may look more like irritability than sadness. Children with depression may also demonstrate quick mood fluctuation. Refusal to attend school, lack of interest in typical activities and excessive sleeping are other warning signs.

"These are symptoms of depression that can look different in kids [and] that are often misinterpreted as being something else by their caregiver," Crawford said.

The pandemic effect

Since 2020, as America's children have been feeling the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting social isolation and disruptions, mental health has been even more of a concern for health care providers and experts.

"I'm seeing that the symptom presentation [of anxiety and depression] is certainly more severe. I'm seeing that there's a 31% increase in emergency room visits for our youth," Crawford said. "And that often is reflective of the fact that these kids are presenting in a state of crisis, and having thoughts of suicide is certainly a mental health-related emergency."

As for access to care, Crawford said, "We're all booked. The waitlist to see a psychiatrist is incredibly long. The same thing is true for our therapists or social workers."

She said the growing demand for services has been encouraging because more people are reaching out for care. "But it's also quite concerning, because there's certainly not enough of us to meet this growing demand. There's only 8,300 child psychiatrists in the entire country. And that's not enough to meet this demand that has been just kind of amplified by the pandemic."

Decreasing the stigma -- and recognizing warning signs

Greene, the Seattle Children's doctor, said he hopes efforts to decrease the stigma around mental health will enable more young people to access care and receive a diagnosis, if one needs to be made. An increase in identification of mental illness would also help, he says.

Lamarr's own struggles as a teen resulted in his mom calling the police and having him admitted to a hospital.

Such a crisis can be any situation where a person's behavior may cause them to harm themselves or others, according to NAMI. It may also present as someone being unable to care for themselves.

Warning signs can include the inability to perform daily tasks (like bathing or brushing teeth) as well as mood swings, isolation and abusive behavior to oneself and others, according to NAMI.

After Lamarr's hospitalization, he told ABC News, things began turning around.

He spent three days in the hospital before starting outpatient treatment and an anger management class, and he eventually transferred to a new school program.

"I was 16 at the time and I remember thinking 'I need to get out of here. I need to start over, start fresh, try again,'" he said.

Learning how to talk about his feelings during treatment was key, he said.

"It turns out sometimes all you need is just the outlet to let off steam or to just open up, or to just be honest or be candid or vent," Lamarr said. "Sometimes when we have so much pent-up frustration or we have so much pent-up anger or we have so much grief or so much pent-up emotion, that we really don't get to release. ... We always are constantly trying to be strong -- we break."

"And that's all it was for me to be honest," he said. "It was just so much just pent up, so much going on, so much that I never really truly dealt with. I never knew how to deal with grief."

Protective factors for Black youth

In addition to decreasing stigma and increasing access to care, Benton said there are protective factors for Black children that can help maintain mental health. Strong positive ethnic identity is one, she said.

There's a lot of research to support that as a protective factor, Benton said, "If you're Black, and you feel good about yourself, and you feel you identify your Blackness as a positive thing, it's protective of all kinds of things."

Other protective factors, she said, include support from families and communities, community engagement, strong school connectedness and focus on academics.

She also said that among Black youth, "church was a big factor. So people who were engaged in a church community and had that sense of connectedness tended to do better."

Mental health as public health

In terms of creating better mental health outcomes among Black youth, Benton said it's about prevention and many of the determinants of future challenges are social.

"The reality is poverty, violence, poor schools, the absence of adequate mental health resources for people who need it -- all of those factors contribute to what we're seeing with kids right now," Benton said.

The impact on young children, she said, primarily among minority groups and those who are growing up economically disadvantaged, is "disproportionate."

"It will not likely be the case that we will decide we're going to redistribute everybody's wealth and nobody's going to be poor anymore," Benton said. "I don't think that's the solution -- though that could be helpful."

	<p>The major issue, Benton said, is making sure kids have access to adequate nutrition, a place to sleep without fear, regular pediatric healthcare, social-emotional learning in schools and engagement with nature.</p> <p>"We all know that those environmental factors actually change the way that people feel and the way they think, and it contributes to emotional health. So I think addressing many of those social factors is really the key," Benton said. "And you don't need to do that at a psychiatrist or psychologist's office. You can do that at home, at the Y, on a sports team -- the people that are most effective in prevention are people at schools and people in the community."</p> <p>"More of a public health approach is what we need around mental health," she added.</p> <p>As for Lamarr, "It's been a journey to get to the point where I really feel like I deserve to be here," he said. "I'm here for a reason. I have a story to tell. I've made it out of the darkness. And now I can be a help, really, to other people."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/06 Russia pounds east, Ukraine pushes back
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/killed-russia-pounds-eastern-ukraine-region-donetsk-86286976
GIST	<p>KRAMATORSK, Ukraine -- Russia redoubled its push for Ukraine's eastern Donbas region Wednesday, with the Ukrainian military claiming to have repelled some advances and both sides reporting casualties.</p> <p>The Ukrainian armed forces General Staff said troops stopped enemy units advancing towards Sloviansk, a city in Donetsk, one of two provinces in the Donbas whose capture is among Moscow's main goals. It also claimed to have repelled Russian attacks on a town and village north of Ukraine's second city, Kharkiv, just miles (kilometers) from the Russian border.</p> <p>The Ukrainian presidential office said most civilian casualties were in Donetsk province, where Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said two people died in the city of Avdiivka; the cities of Sloviansk, Krasnohorivka and Kurakhove each reported one civilian killed.</p> <p>"Every crime will be punished," he wrote on social media.</p> <p>Kyrylenko urged the province's more than 350,000 remaining residents to flee late Tuesday, saying that evacuating Donetsk was necessary to save lives and allow the Ukrainian army to put up a better defense against the Russian advance.</p> <p>Donetsk is part of the Donbas, a mostly Russian-speaking industrial area where Ukraine's most experienced soldiers are concentrated. Pro-Russian separatists have fought Ukrainian forces and controlled much of the Donbas for eight years.</p> <p>Before Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, Russian President Vladimir Putin recognized the independence of Donetsk and Luhansk, the two self-proclaimed separatist republics. Putin on Monday declared the complete seizure of Luhansk, after Ukrainian troops withdrew from the last city under their control in the province.</p> <p>Luhansk Gov. Serhiy Haidai denied Wednesday that the Russians had completely captured the province. Heavy fighting continued in villages around Lysychansk, the city Ukrainians soldiers withdrew from and which Russian troops took Sunday, he said.</p> <p>"The Russians have paid a high price, but the Luhansk region is not fully captured by the Russian army," Haidai said. "Some settlements have been overrun by each side several times."</p>

He accused Russian forces of scorched earth tactics, “burning down and destroying everything on their way.”

The Russian military pounded Luhansk for weeks from the air and ground, causing mass destruction and large civilian casualties. When Russian troops enter villages and cities, they are largely empty. From pre-war populations each of around 100,000, only up to 15,000 residents remain in Lysychansk and some 8,000 in the nearby city of Sievierodonetsk, which Russian and separatist fighters seized last month, Haidai said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in his nightly video address Wednesday, said that of all the battles in his country, “the most brutal confrontation” is raging in the Donbas.

The Associated Press on Wednesday saw the bloody aftermath of one attack in the rebel-held Donetsk town of Makiivka and spoke to eyewitnesses who said a Soviet-era missile struck a playground outside a residential home. Local separatists blamed the attack on Ukrainian forces.

Blood stained the seat of a swing and pooled on the ground below. Russian media cited the separatists as saying two children were killed and three children and two adults were wounded.

“The boy was lying on the swings like this and I saw he had blood coming out from this side,” said resident Svetlana Lyga. “I did not come close ... I simply couldn’t. The girl was taken by the ambulance. She was alive at that moment.”

North of Donetsk, Russian forces hit Kharkiv with missile strikes overnight. Kharkiv regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said Wednesday on Telegram that one person was killed and three, including a toddler, were injured. First responders crunched through the debris of a Kharkiv university, where Zelenskyy said the main building, lecture halls, museum and library were destroyed.

“When it comes to the definition of barbarism, this strike fits the bill the most,” the Ukrainian president said in his nightly address. “Only an enemy of civilization and humanity can do such things — strike missiles at a university, a pedagogical university.”

The attacks indicated that residents of the city are unlikely to enjoy calm as the war grinds into its fifth month.

Providing its account of the fighting in Kharkiv, Russia’s Defense Ministry said its forces killed up to 100 Ukrainian troops and destroyed four armored vehicles. The ministry also said its forces struck a Ukrainian air-defense radar and camp housing foreign fighters in southern Ukraine’s Mykolaiv region.

The ministry’s chief spokesman, Igor Konashenkov, claimed air-launched high precision missiles destroyed two HIMARS multiple-launch rocket systems the U.S. had sent to Ukraine. The Ukrainian military denied Moscow’s claims.

Elsewhere on the battlefield:

— Russian rocket strikes wounded four people in the town of Pokrovska in Ukraine’s eastern Dnipropetrovsk region, Gov. Valentyn Reznichenko wrote on Telegram. He added that four settlements to the west came under relentless shelling Wednesday, burning wheat fields, damaging a solar power plant and destroying a house.

— In southern Ukraine, a local official said one person died and four were wounded in a blast in a Russian-occupied town, Skadovsk. Mayor Oleksandr Yakovlev told the Suspilne broadcaster a child was among those injured in an explosion that tore through a residential building.

— Russian state media claimed Wednesday that an oil refinery in Donetsk had caught fire due to Ukrainian shelling. The Tass news agency cited a separatists’ claim that the refinery fire was one of 27

	Ukrainian attacks on Donetsk over the previous 24 hours. Ukrainian authorities didn't immediately confirm the attack.
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HEADLINE	07/06 Mass funeral: 21 teens mysteriously died
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/mass-funeral-21-teenagers-mysteriously-died-south-african/story?id=86234867
GIST	<p>EAST LONDON, South Africa -- More than a thousand people gathered in South Africa's coastal town of East London on Wednesday to attend a funeral for 21 teenagers who died under mysterious circumstances at a popular nightclub nearly two weeks ago.</p> <p>South African President Cyril Ramaphosa was among the many mourners -- mostly grieving family, friends and other members of the community in East London's Scenery Park township. When giving the eulogy for the young victims, Ramaphosa said the last words of the youngest -- a 13-year-old boy -- was: "Mama, I am coming back."</p> <p>A large tent erected on a sports field for the service was not big enough to accommodate the number of people in attendance, so hundreds more sat outside and watched on television screens. Friends and classmates of the victims were dressed in their school uniforms as they paid their respects. Candles were lit alongside photographs of each of the deceased.</p> <p>Only 19 coffins were on display in the tent, as two families had already held private burials. However, the coffins were all empty, in respect of the wishes of the families who "did not want their children paraded in public," according to Samkelo Ngwenya, a spokesperson for the local government, the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality. The bodies will be buried in private ceremonies at various cemeteries after Wednesday's symbolic funeral and in the coming days, Ngwenya told ABC News.</p> <p>The Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality provided burial assistance to the victims' families.</p> <p>What caused the deaths of the 21 teens -- 12 girls and nine boys -- remains unknown. They were found at the Enyobeni Tavern in Scenery Park, a suburb on the edge of East London in South Africa's Eastern Cape province, in the predawn hours of June 26. Seventeen of the victims were pronounced dead at the scene, while four others died when they were hospitalized or being transported to hospitals, according to the South African Police Service.</p> <p>Police said the victims ranged in age from 13 to 17 -- all under South Africa's legal drinking age of 18. The Eastern Cape Liquor Board has opened a criminal case against the owners of the Enyobeni Tavern for allegedly selling alcohol to minors.</p> <p>Earlier this week, Ramaphosa wrote in his weekly letter to the public that South Africa needs to have a "frank conversation" about alcohol consumption. He warned that the increased social acceptability of young people consuming alcohol has become a serious problem in a country where the majority of the drinking population is already classified by the World Health Organization as binge drinkers.</p> <p>Toxicology reports were still pending as of Wednesday. A stampede has been ruled out because the bodies did not show any serious injuries, according to police.</p> <p>Police have declined to comment on possible causes of deaths or the circumstances surrounding the incident, citing the ongoing investigation. No arrests have been made and no suspects have been named in connection with the probe, according to police.</p> <p>"There are no new developments at this stage," Brig. Tembinkosi Kinana, a spokesperson for the South African Police Service, told ABC News on Tuesday. "At an appropriate time and once the [toxicology] results are out, a formal statement will be issued. It has not yet been determined as to when the results will be out."</p>

	<p>The Daily Dispatch, a South African newspaper published in East London, reported that the teens were attending a party at the Enyobeni Tavern to celebrate the end of June school exams. Their bodies were reportedly found strewn across tables, chairs and the dance floor with no visible signs of injuries.</p> <p>A 22-year-old Scenery Park resident, Sibongile Mtsewu, told ABC News he was at the Enyobeni Tavern when the deadly incident unfolded. He said he was ordering drinks at the crowded club when suddenly the doors were closed and some type of chemical agent, such as tear gas or pepper spray, was released into the air.</p> <p>"There was no way out," Mtsewu told ABC News in a telephone interview last week. "There was no chance to breathe."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/06 FDA plan: diversify infant formula industry
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Lifestyle/wireStory/us-diversify-infant-formula-industry-avoid-shortages-86319175
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON -- The Biden administration is trying to help foreign makers of baby formula stay on the U.S. market for the long term, in an effort to diversify the industry after the closure of the largest domestic plant sparked a nationwide shortage.</p> <p>The Food and Drug Administration on Wednesday announced plans to help overseas producers that have sent supplies to the United States, under emergency approval to address the shortfall, secure long-term authorization to market their formula in the U.S.</p> <p>The agency will provide a way for producers temporarily selling in the U.S. to meet existing regulatory requirements so they can stay on the market, providing consumers with more choices and making supplies more resilient against current and future shortages.</p> <p>The FDA will also host meetings and provide producers with a single point of contact to work through the regulatory system to make the application process more efficient.</p> <p>"The need to diversify and strengthen the U.S. infant formula supply is more important than ever," said the FDA commissioner, Dr. Robert Califf, and Susan Mayne, the director of the agency's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, in a statement. "The recent shutdown of a major infant formula plant, compounded by unforeseen natural weather events, has shown just how vulnerable the supply chain has become."</p> <p>The U.S. has tried to boost supply of baby formula after regulators in February shuttered a Michigan plant run by Abbott, the largest domestic manufacturer of baby formula, over safety concerns. The plant reopened June 4 after the company committed to additional sanitizing and safety protocols, but closed again in mid-June after severe weather caused damage to the plant.</p> <p>The company said it needs time to assess damage and sanitize the factory again after severe thunderstorms and heavy rains swept through southwestern Michigan on June 13.</p> <p>In May, the FDA eased federal import regulations to allow baby formula to be shipped to the U.S., and President Joe Biden authorized the use of the Defense Production Act, providing federal support to get formula from overseas into the U.S.</p> <p>The White House said that by this coming Sunday, its efforts will have brought 43 million 8-ounce bottle equivalents of infant formula into the U.S. and FDA has cleared the equivalent of 400 million 8-ounce bottles for import into the U.S.</p> <p>"Infant formula is an essential food product that is the sole source of nutrition for many babies in the U.S. Companies and their manufacturing facilities must meet rigorous FDA standards that ensure the formula is</p>

both safe and nutritious,” Califf and Mayne said. “These standards are necessary to protect our children and will not be sacrificed for long-term supply considerations.”

The FDA’s policy of temporary enforcement discretion is set to expire in November, but the administration says it will renew it if necessary to ensure domestic supply.

“Today’s announcement by the FDA will help ensure the infant formula supply market is less vulnerable to future supply shocks and will provide families with the confidence of steady access to a variety of safe infant formulas,” said White House spokesman Kevin Munoz.

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HEADLINE	07/06 FBI director: China ‘biggest threat’ to US
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/fbi-director-calls-china-biggest-us-threat-authorities/story?id=86336590
GIST	<p>Speaking alongside his British counterpart in London on Wednesday, FBI Director Christopher Wray called China the "biggest long-term threat" to both the U.S. and the U.K.</p> <p>"The Chinese government is set on stealing your technology -- whatever it is that makes your industry tick -- and using it to undercut your business and dominate your market," Wray said while giving remarks to international business leaders. "And they're set on using every tool at their disposal to do it."</p> <p>Wray also warned of potential tactics by Chinese officials, saying they steal technology by using intelligence officers to "target" valuable pieces of information and companies.</p> <p>"We've even caught people affiliated with Chinese companies out in the U.S. heartland, sneaking into fields to dig up proprietary, genetically modified seeds, which would have cost them nearly a decade and billions in research to develop themselves," Wray said. "And those efforts pale in comparison to their lavishly-resourced hacking program that's bigger than that of every other major country combined."</p> <p>The Chinese, Wray said, use cyber to "steal" volumes of information. He said U.S. officials are working with MI5, the British intelligence service, to identify other investments that the Chinese government makes in proxy relationships -- a kind of third-party venue through which China steals information.</p> <p>Wray said that U.S. companies should be wary of working with or in China, something about which he has warned before, and he urged business leaders to contact the FBI for further information on ways to mitigate the Chinese cyber threat.</p> <p>His warning was the latest episode of the U.S. pushing back on what they describe as Chinese hostility. Relations between the U.S. and China have evolved since President Joe Biden took office -- his predecessor Donald Trump embarked on a trade war with the country -- and the U.S. and China remain deeply intertwined, though they are often opposed on various issues.</p> <p>After one call between Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping earlier this year, the Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry said, "The U.S.-China relationship has not yet emerged from the predicament created by the previous U.S. administration but has instead encountered more and more challenges. The U.S. side has made a misreading and misjudgment of China's strategic intentions."</p> <p>On Wednesday, Wray warned that if China were to invade Taiwan, U.S. companies could see a repeat, on a much larger scale, of the economic disarray from Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the resulting international condemnation.</p> <p>"Just as in Russia, Western investments built over years could become hostage capital stranded, supply chains and relationships disrupted," he said. "Companies are caught between sanctions and Chinese law forbidding compliance with them. That's not just geopolitics. It's business forecasting."</p> <p>Wray concluded by saying the U.S. and U.K. were working together to combat this threat.</p>

His remarks come as American law enforcement agencies and the Treasury Department cautioned the public of another overseas adversary, this one targeting hospital systems.

North Korean-backed cyber actors are targeting the health care and public health sector, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), the FBI and Treasury Department said on Wednesday.

These actors use Maui ransomware, a specific technology that has a North Korean hallmark, to infiltrate health care sectors and hold their systems ransom in exchange for a payment, American officials said in an advisory.

The officials said that since May 2021, the agencies have observed and reacted to "multiple" Maui ransomware incidents indicating that they came from North Korea.

"North Korean state-sponsored cyber actors used Maui ransomware in these incidents to encrypt servers responsible for healthcare services—including electronic health records services, diagnostics services, imaging services, and intranet services," the advisory states. "In some cases, these incidents disrupted the services provided by the targeted HPH Sector organizations for prolonged periods."

The agencies believe that because health care organizations "provide services that are critical to human life and health," they are likely to pay ransoms when attacked. Law enforcement advise not paying the ransom and to contact CISA or the FBI instead.

"Because of this assumption, the FBI, CISA, and Treasury assess North Korean state-sponsored actors are likely to continue targeting HPH Sector organizations," the officials said.

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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	07/07 Disneyland Instagram account hacked
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/nation-world/disneyland-insta-hacked/507-d114f264-9b5c-43b5-87fe-97a0e3099e98
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The official Instagram account for Disneyland appears to have been hacked, posting a series of photos including memes and selfies of the supposed hacker.</p> <p>The four non-sanctioned posts, as well as posts on the page's Instagram Live story, were all made within an hour early Thursday morning. All were signed by "David Do," with one post linking to a private Instagram account with a profile picture of the same person featured in the hacker's selfies.</p> <p>The hacked messages were deleted shortly before 8 a.m. Thursday.</p> <p>The hacker's posts all featured explicit language, with some making joking references to COVID-19. Two other accounts were tagged by the hacker in different posts, but it's unclear if those accounts are connected to the hack.</p> <p>"I am a super hacker that is here to bring revenge upon Disney land. I am ----- tired of all these ----- Disney employees mocking me for having a small -----. WHO'S THE TOUGH GUY NOW JEROME?" the caption on one post read.</p> <p>It's unclear if Disney was able to regain control of the account or if the hacker deleted the posts while remaining logged on.</p>

	<p>None of Disneyland's other accounts appear to have been affected. Some reports on social media claim the company's Facebook account was also hacked, but those reports could not be verified.</p> <p>Attempts to contact the hacker were unsuccessful Thursday morning. It's not clear if they will face legal repercussions for the stunt.</p> <p>Disney did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the hack.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/07 Chinese hackers target Russia govt.
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/chinese-hackers-targeting-russian-government-telecoms-report/
GIST	<p>Chinese hacking groups are targeting the Russian government and organizations in the telecommunications industry, according to a new report from cybersecurity company SentinelOne.</p> <p>The report found that there has been a noticeable increase in Russian targeting by suspected Chinese threat actors. Tom Hegel, senior threat researcher at SentinelOne, attributed the targeting to state-sponsored espionage groups deploying a decade-old Remote Access Trojan (RAT) called Bisonal.</p> <p>The RAT has long been associated with Chinese hackers who have previously been seen targeting organizations in Russia, Japan, South Korea and others.</p> <p>In the latest campaign, SentinelOne found Microsoft Office documents and phishing emails spoofing RU-CERT — the country's cybersecurity incident response center — as well as Russian government bodies regulating the telecommunications industry.</p> <p>Hegel said the attacks are “likely unique to the particular organization they compromise.”</p> <p>The documents both exploit CVE-2018-0798, a remote execution vulnerability in Microsoft Office, to install the embedded malware.</p> <p>“While direct information collection may be the objected, we also observe them targeting to do further attacks — such as with the Pakistan account compromise to do further phishing,” Hegel said, noting that telecommunications companies in Pakistan have also been targeted.</p> <p>“The exploits used in these attacks are quite old and well known. The organizations being compromised in these cases are vulnerable to the most simple attacks out there. It may speak to the ease of compromising such organizations, even while actively engaged in a war.”</p> <p>SentinelOne obtained some of the malicious documents from Ukraine's CERT, which shared the files in alert #4860 on June 22.</p> <p>Ukrainian security researchers said the malicious documents were built with a tool called “Royal Road” and were “themed around Russian government interests.”</p> <p>From those documents, SentinelOne said it found “supplemental Chinese threat activity.”</p> <p>“China's recent intelligence objectives against Russia can be observed in multiple campaigns following the invasion of Ukraine, such as Scarab, Mustang Panda, ‘Space Pirates’, and now the findings here,” SentinelOne said.</p> <p>“While the overlap of publicly reported actor names inevitably muddies the picture, it remains clear that the Chinese intelligence apparatus is targeting a wide range of Russian-linked organizations. Our findings currently offer only an incomplete picture of this threat cluster's phishing activity, but they serve to provide perspective into an attacker's ongoing operational objectives and a framework for our ongoing research.”</p>

Royal Road is allegedly used widely among Chinese APT groups and SentinelOne said Bisonal is a backdoor RAT “unique to Chinese threat actors.”

One of the malicious documents purporting to be from RU-CERT is a memo on increased phishing attacks.

There is some evidence tying the activity to an APT group SentinelOne referred to as Tonto Team, with alternate names like “CactusPete” and “Earth Akhlut.” The group was previously accused of [targeting a portion of India’s power sector](#).

They are unsure if the group potentially shares its tools with others, making it difficult to confidently tie Tonto Team to the latest Russia campaign. But SentinelOne noted that they have previously seen Tonto Team target governments, critical infrastructure, and other private businesses in several northeast Asian countries and Russia.

“These documents often contain metadata indicating the document creator’s operating system was using simplified Chinese, a trait we observed in our previous analysis of Scarab APT activity,” the report added.

“Based on our observations, there’s been a continued effort to target Russian organizations by this cluster through well-known attack methods – the use of malicious documents exploiting n-day vulnerabilities with lures specifically relevant to Russian organizations.”

The researchers previously saw campaigns from this group targeting the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority through a potentially compromised account in the Cabinet Division of the Pakistani government in May.

Last year, researchers with cybersecurity company Cybereason [found other Chinese state-backed hacking groups](#) using the same vulnerability – CVE-2018-0798 – in attacks on a Russian defense contractor involved in designing nuclear submarines for the Russian Navy.

That campaign similarly used malicious documents created with Royal Road.

On Wednesday, deputy director of Russia’s National Coordination Center for Computer Incidents Nikolay Murashov [said](#) the country is facing an “unprecedented cyber campaign” since it began its invasion of Ukraine earlier this year.

“On average, a government agency in charge of detecting, thwarting and neutralizing cyberattacks has been registering more than 200 hacking attacks on a daily basis,” Murashov said.

“These have been conducted from around the globe, and are well-coordinated at that.”

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HEADLINE	07/06 NFT scammers eye opportunity in Ukraine
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/nft-scammers-see-an-opportunity-in-ukraine-donations/
GIST	<p>The Ukrainian government and celebrities have been promoting non-fungible tokens (NFTs) and cryptocurrencies to raise funds for the country’s military during its ongoing war with Russia.</p> <p>Although the tactic has proven to be effective — in the first five weeks of the war, Ukraine received more than \$135 million in cryptocurrency donations — there’s a downside. Like much of the cryptocurrency industry, donation campaigns for Ukraine are rife with fraud and scams, according to researchers.</p> <p>On Tuesday, Ukrainian open-source intelligence company Molnar published an investigation detailing how a firm called ZelenskiyNFT sold Ukrainian-themed NFTs allegedly to help the military and refugees, but instead seemed to have pocketed the money.</p>

The co-founders of ZelenskiyNFT dismissed the accusations, calling the investigation “absurd.” The Record reached out to the organization through the Telegram messaging app — an advisor using the pseudonym “Twain” for security reasons said that “all proceeds from the NFT sale were transferred to charities.”

“We are very transparent,” he added, but provided no additional details.

Some of the charities look suspicious, according to Molfar: they were created between March and May of this year, they have a handful of followers on Facebook, and there is no information about their founders or total donations collected. Their social media accounts seem to be followed by bots, Molfar found.

Other Ukrainian charities listed by ZelenskiyNFT told The Record they received no money from the group. Just one organization confirmed that it received 1.18 ETH (about \$1,300) from ZelenskiyNFT.

A mysterious company

Behind the ZelenskiyNFT project is the little-known studio IamUkraine. Molfar investigators said they couldn’t find the firm in any existing company registers. Publicly, however, the project claims it’s working with leading startups and Fortune 500 companies.

All that is known about the company’s employees and owners are names and digital avatars made with the free app ZEPETO.

ZelenskiyNFT collection – [traded](#) on NFT marketplace OpenSea – consists of more than 9,500 artworks, each representing Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in various personas – Hulk, Doctor Strange, Ninja Turtle, Iron Man. One NFT costs about \$276.

Molfar’s OSINT investigation found that Twain is a Russian citizen, and his co-founders — Dzmitry and Volodymyr — are Belarusian and Ukrainian, respectively. Most of the team now lives in the Czech Republic but were born in Russia, according to Molfar.

“The team does have people from Russia,” Twain confirmed to The Record. “And the fact that there are those who care among Russians only deserves respect.”

Twain did not say how much money the charities received from ZelenskiyNFT. The employees of Ukrainian Balu Charity and Tabletochki told The Record that they discussed a possible partnership with ZelenskiyNFT, but haven’t received any funds.

A spokeswoman for Donor.ua told The Record that the organization received about \$1,300 in Ethereum from ZelenskiyNFT, but the transaction wasn’t straightforward.

A representative for a charity called People’s Coalition told The Record that his fund has received “hundreds of thousands of dollars” from ZelenskiyNFT since March 2022, even though NFTs from the group only started trading in June.

The spokesman also asked The Record to write “only good things” about the project because “it gives a lot of money” to his organization. He refused to specify the number or what causes the charity supports.

There are other signs that point to an alleged scam, according to Molfar. The company’s Twitter account, for instance, has 17,000 followers, most of which seem to be bots. Its Instagram has only 13 followers.

The company also paid for its advertising in Ukrainian and foreign media – there are no organic mentions of it on the internet, Molfar found.

Additionally, ZelenskiyNFT doesn’t work with local authorities, such as the state-funded NFT Museum, which sells digital art to raise money for Ukraine. Its spokeswoman, Valeria Panina, told The Record that she “heard that this project is a scam.”

What's next for NFTs

Fraud is rife in the NFT market. In February, OpenSea users lost \$1.7 million in NFTs in a phishing attack; nearly \$2.9 million [was stolen](#) when the Bored Ape Yacht Club's Instagram account [was compromised](#).

And as NFTs have become more common in philanthropy, scammers have jumped in as well. Creators of the NFT project Doodled Dragons, for example, [promised](#) to donate all earnings to charity, but took all the money and ran.

There are several charitable NFT projects in Ukraine in addition to the [NFT Museum](#), such as [Avatars for Ukraine](#). These projects are backed by the government and are transparent about the total amount of funds raised and how they will use them.

"It's easy to fall victim to crypto scams in Ukraine these days," Artem Starosiek, CEO at Molfar, told The Record. "People are so eager to help their country that they rarely engage in critical thinking."

On July 6, Starosiek told The Record that Molfar had reported ZelenskiyNFT as fraudulent content on OpenSea and filed a complaint with the cyber police of the Czech Republic as well as Ukrainian law enforcement.

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HEADLINE	07/06 New OrBit Linux malware
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2022/07/researchers-warn-of-new-orbit-linux.html
GIST	<p>Cybersecurity researchers have taken the wraps off a new and entirely undetected Linux threat dubbed OrBit, signally a growing trend of malware attacks geared towards the popular operating system.</p> <p>The malware gets its name from one of the filenames that's utilized to temporarily store the output of executed commands ("/tmp/.orbit"), according to cybersecurity firm Intezer.</p> <p>"It can be installed either with persistence capabilities or as a volatile implant," security researcher Nicole Fishbein said. "The malware implements advanced evasion techniques and gains persistence on the machine by hooking key functions, provides the threat actors with remote access capabilities over SSH, harvests credentials, and logs TTY commands."</p> <p>OrBit is the fourth Linux malware to have come to light in a short span of three months after BPFDoor, Symbiote, and Syslogk.</p> <p>The malware also functions a lot like Symbiote in that it's designed to infect all of the running processes on the compromised machines. But unlike the latter which leverages the LD_PRELOAD environment variable to load the shared object, OrBit employs two different methods.</p> <p>"The first way is by adding the shared object to the configuration file that is used by the loader," Fishbein explained. "The second way is by patching the binary of the loader itself so it will load the malicious shared object."</p> <p>The attack chain commences with an ELF dropper file that's responsible for extracting the payload ("libdl.so") and adding it to the shared libraries that are being loaded by the dynamic linker.</p> <p>The rogue shared library is engineered to hook functions from three libraries — libc, libcap, and Pluggable Authentication Module (PAM) — causing existing and new processes to use the modified functions, essentially permitting it to harvest credentials, hide network activity, and set up remote access to the host over SSH, all the while staying under the radar.</p>

	<p>Furthermore, OrBit relies on a barrage of methods that allows it to function without alerting its presence and establish persistence in a manner that makes it difficult to remove from the infected machines.</p> <p>Once engaged, the backdoor's ultimate goal is to steal information by hooking the read and write functions to capture data that's being written by the executed processes on the machine, including bash and sh commands, the results of which are stored in specific files.</p> <p>"What makes this malware especially interesting is the almost hermetic hooking of libraries on the victim machine, that allows the malware to gain persistence and evade detection while stealing information and setting SSH backdoor," Fishbein said.</p> <p>"Threats that target Linux continue to evolve while successfully staying under the radar of security tools, now OrBit is one more example of how evasive and persistent new malware can be."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/06 Phishing targets QuickBooks program
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/email-security/quickbooks-accounting-software-targeted-for-sophisticated-phishing-attacks
GIST	<p>Even though consumers' annual tax day has long passed, savvy cybercriminals are still focused on fleecing business accounting software users with a new wave of tricky phishing scams.</p> <p>According to a notice at the Intuit website, customers of its popular QuickBooks accounting program have received phishing emails warning users their accounts have supposedly been "suspended." The realistic-looking emails are aimed at duping QuickBooks users to share their financial data or provide access to their accounts.</p> <p>The notification from the long-established financial software giant explained how phishing works, and advised QuickBooks users not to click links or open attachments from potentially suspicious emails. It also went on to say: "Intuit has recently received reports from customers that they have received emails similar to the one below. This email did not come from Intuit. The sender is not associated with Intuit, is not an authorized agent of Intuit, nor is their use of Intuit's brands authorized by Intuit."</p> <p>Typical phishing emails sent out by attackers falsely representing the accounting software's support team have gone out to QuickBooks users as recently as last month, reading: "We're writing to let you know that after conducting a review of your business, we have been unable to verify some information on your account. For that reason, we have put a temporary hold on your account."</p> <p>"If you believe that we've made a mistake, we'd like to remedy the situation as quickly as possible," the scam email said. "To help us effectively revisit your account please complete the below verification form. Once verification has been completed, we will re-review your account within 24-48 hours."</p> <p>QuickBooks users who did fall for the ruse and clicked the "Complete Verification" button in the fake email were redirected to a phishing site designed to harvest their financial information or infect their systems with malware.</p> <p>In a blog post on these attacks, Jeremy Fuchs, cybersecurity researcher and analyst at Avanan, a Check Point software company, observed that bad actors have been using the QuickBooks domain and website to send fake invoices and request payments since May 2022. Increasingly, threat actors are finding new schemes to target business as well as consumer-accounting users and taxpayers throughout the year with increasingly advanced attacks.</p> <p>"Hackers continually impersonate trusted brands to get into the inbox. By leveraging the legitimacy of a trusted domain, security solutions are more likely to view the email itself as legitimate," according to Fuchs's research. "The content of the email may differ from the services that the domain offers. That's not</p>

necessarily important; what is important is leveraging the legitimate service. We call this [The Static Expressway](#).”

In other words, cybercriminals are exploiting well-known website domains — like QuickBooks — that are typically on “static” whitelists, and therefore allowed into inboxes automatically.

Bad actors start off by signing up for and creating a free QuickBooks account, and then proceed to send emails from this domain, typically spoofing other common software like Office 365. In essence, attackers are leveraging the long-time legitimacy and popularity of QuickBooks (or other common types of software) to trick busy business users (QuickBooks has been around nearly four decades).

In addition to the “account suspension” scam, QuickBooks tricksters will email what appears to be a legitimate invoice for Norton Utilities from their QuickBooks domain, and urge business users to call them with any questions. Once the accounting software user calls the given number, cyber-thieves will ask for credit card information or other financial details.

Avanan’s Fuchs pointed out that over the years this technique — often combining social engineering with emails sent from well-established domains to access to funds and financial data — has targeted users from other static, trusted brands including [Microsoft](#), Google and [Adobe](#). “The idea is to take advantage of the fact that these popular websites are on static Allow Lists,” according to Fuchs’s blog.

“Organizations can’t block Google, so Google-related domains are allowed to come into the inbox. These [static lists are continually pilfered by hackers](#).”

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HEADLINE	07/06 'IconBurst' supply-chain attack
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/news/third-party-risk/iconburst-supply-chain-attack-uses-typo-squatting-to-spread-malicious-javascript-packages-via-npm
GIST	<p>Researchers this week discovered IconBurst, a widespread software supply chain attack based on typo-squatting that consisted of malicious Javascript packages spread via the node package manager (NPM).</p> <p>In a blog post, researchers at ReversingLabs identified more than two dozen NPM packages dating back six months that contain obfuscated Javascript designed to steal form data from individuals using apps or websites where the malicious packages had been deployed.</p> <p>When the researchers dug deeper, they discovered a coordinated supply chain attack with a large number of NPM packages containing jQuery scripts designed to steal form data from deployed applications that included them. While the full extent of this attack is not yet determined, the researchers said the malicious packages are likely used by hundreds, if not thousands of downstream mobile and desktop applications, as well as websites. In one case, a malicious package had been downloaded more than 17,000 times.</p> <p>The researchers said the threat actors used a typo-squatting technique to fool developers into confusing the malicious packages with their legitimate counterparts. They said packages created by the NPM ionic-io author, for example, show that the author published 18 versions of an NPM package named icon-package (thus the attack's code name) that contains the malicious form-stealing code.</p> <p>“That was a glaring attempt to mislead developers into using this package instead of ionicons, a popular, open-source icon set with more than 1,000 icons for web, iOS, Android, and desktop apps.”</p> <p>Tim Helming, cybersecurity evangelist at DomainTools, said ReversingLabs' work highlights an important point: among all of the sophisticated technology used by cybercriminals, they often still make use of surprisingly simple methods to initiate hostile actions — in this case, creating malicious packages with names that closely imitate legitimate packages.</p>

“This is very similar to the tactic used by many phishing campaigns where imitative domain names can deceive web users into clicking on a malicious URL,” Helming said. “Criminals recognize and prey on the fact that when people are moving fast, under pressure, it’s easy to make small mistakes that can add up to much larger consequences. Users of all forms of computer technology should be on heightened lookout for spoofs, be they of domains, software packages, or other objects.”

Developers selecting the correct component for their application rarely review the implementation of that component, said Tim Mackey, principal security strategist at the Synopsys Cybersecurity Research Center. Mackey said despite the potential implementation risks, developers are measured on how quickly they implement new functionality or fix bugs in existing functionality.

“This then means they need to rely upon reputational metrics to determine whether a given component is trustworthy,” Mackey said. “Examples of such metrics include version number, downloads, age, stars and the reputation of the author. Malicious teams engaged in typo-squatting attacks know this dynamic and craft their components to not only have a similar name to a legitimate component, but to also have strong reputational metrics.”

Pan Kamal, head of products at BluBracket, said on initial review it looks like a combination of dependency vulnerabilities exploit, fuzzing, and malware injection that makes up this type of incident. Kamal said over the past year, software supply chain has come into sharp focus as more credential and code-based attacks have taken place. Kamal said application security, as well as identity and access management, are cybersecurity segments that are seeing a lot of demand.

“With the constant need to accelerate the pace of software deployment, security for apps has become more complex as the use of open source software and code from third-party repositories becomes more prevalent,” Kamal said.

“Developers now take a more defined role in the deployment of application security. Cloud infrastructure and operational technology that drives the configuration and operation of our industrial control systems for utilities, water, oil and gas, chemicals, and transportation are all based on code. Software-based configuration opens up vulnerabilities that hackers can exploit to perpetrate attacks. Vulnerabilities in code are contributing to it becoming the largest cyberattack surface. Software supply chains, which are no longer monolithic entities, are made up of several disparate software components from multiple sources and are being targeted to attack critical infrastructure and operational systems.”

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HEADLINE	07/07 Russia info ops ramp up to divide West
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/russian-info-ops-divide-west/
GIST	<p>Multiple Russian influence networks have been running disinformation and influence campaigns since May designed to sow division in the West over its support for Ukraine, according to Recorded Future.</p> <p>These efforts are being conducted by “state-controlled media, known covert intelligence outlets, and known propaganda and disinformation amplifiers” including ‘legitimate’ broadcasters like RT, disinformation outlets like Southfront, and “Telegram troll farms” like Cyber Front Z, the report claimed.</p> <p>France, Germany, Poland and Turkey are the primary targets for these influence operations. They seek to amplify existing divisions – such as Turkey’s initial refusal to admit Finland and Sweden to NATO – or make them up completely, for example via forged documents claiming Lithuanian and Polish troops are planning to invade western Ukraine.</p> <p>Another key Russian influence ops narrative documented by Recorded Future seeks to stoke discontent among Western voters with the cost-of-living crisis, and blame it on Ukraine.</p> <p>“Attempts to stir internal discontent toward a country’s existing leadership will very likely precede future attempts to engage in malign influence during election cycles and other target-specific political milestones,</p>

in hope of projecting a candidate, party or platform more in alignment with, or at least less abrasive to, Russia's strategic objectives in Ukraine," the report argued.

"These figures need not be aligned with the Kremlin or hold 'pro-Russian' views, but can be favored for having a set of proposed neutral or non-intervention policies, or any views that would indicate an opportunity to disturb or undermine the Western coalition."

Fake news efforts are also portraying Ukrainian refugees as negatively impacting their host countries, such as a 'stabbing' in Warsaw by three drunk Ukrainian men.

These efforts are likely to persist even after the war has concluded, in an attempt to swing international opinion in the country's favor and undermine trust in Western media reporting, the study claimed.

Recorded Future's assessment is lent extra weight by an FSB "propaganda manual" apparently intercepted by the Ukrainian secret service which describes many of the narratives listed above, it said.

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HEADLINE	07/06 Moving from Cobalt Strike to Brute Ratel
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/ransomware-hacking-groups-move-from-cobalt-strike-to-brute-ratel/
GIST	<p>Hacking groups and ransomware operations are moving away from Cobalt Strike to the newer Brute Ratel post-exploitation toolkit to evade detection by EDR and antivirus solutions.</p> <p>Corporate cybersecurity teams commonly consist of employees who attempt to breach corporate networks (red team) and those who actively defend against them (blue team). Both teams then share notes after engagements to strengthen the cybersecurity defenses of a network.</p> <p>For years, one of the most popular tools in red team engagements has been Cobalt Strike, a toolkit allowing attackers to deploy "beacons" on compromised devices to perform remote network surveillance or execute commands.</p> <p>While Cobalt Strike is legitimate software, threat actors have been sharing cracked versions online, making it one of the most popular tools used by hackers and ransomware operations to spread laterally through breached corporate networks.</p> <p>Hackers switch to Brute Ratel</p> <p>In 2020, Chetan Nayak, an ex-red teamer at Mandiant and CrowdStrike, released Brute Ratel Command and Control Center (BRc4) as an alternative to Cobalt Strike for red team penetration testing engagements.</p> <p>Like Cobalt Strike, Brute Ratel is an adversarial attack simulation tool that allows red teamers to deploy 'Badgers' (similar to beacons in Cobalt Strike) on remote hosts. These badgers connect back to the attacker's Command and Control server to receive commands to execute or transmit the output of previously run commands.</p> <p>In a new report by Palo Alto Unit 42, researchers have spotted threat actors moving away from Cobalt Strike to using Brute Ratel as their post-exploitation toolkit of choice.</p> <p>This change in tactics is significant as BRc4 is designed to evade detection by EDR and antivirus solutions, with almost all security software not detecting it as malicious when first spotted in the wild.</p> <p>"While this capability has managed to stay out of the spotlight and remains less commonly known than its Cobalt Strike brethren, it is no less sophisticated," explains Unit 42's report.</p>

"Instead, this tool is uniquely dangerous in that it was specifically designed to avoid detection by endpoint detection and response (EDR) and antivirus (AV) capabilities. Its effectiveness at doing so can clearly be witnessed by the aforementioned lack of detection across vendors on VirusTotal."

In attacks suspected to be linked to the Russian state-sponsored hacking group APT29 (aka CozyBear and Dukes), threat actors distribute malicious ISOs that allegedly contain a submitted résumé (CV).

However, the 'Roshan-Bandara_CV_Dialog' résumé file is actually a Windows shortcut that will launch the bundled OneDriveUpdater.exe file...

While OneDriveUpdater.exe is a legitimate Microsoft executable, the included version.dll that is loaded by the program has been modified to act as a loader for a Brute Ratel badger, which is loaded into the RuntimeBroker.exe process.

Once the Brute Ratel badger is loaded, the threat actors can remotely access the compromised device to execute commands and spread further in the now-breached network.

Ransomware gangs get in on the action

Brute Ratel currently costs \$2,500 per user for a one-year license, with customers required to provide a business email address and be verified before a license is issued.

"But due to the nature of the software, we only sell the product to registered companies and individuals with an official business e-mail address/Domain after verifying the business and the person's work history," explains the Brute Ratel [pricing page](#).

As this is a manual verification process, it raises the question of how the threat actors receive software licenses.

Brute Ratel developer [Chetan Nayak](#) told BleepingComputer that the license used in attacks reported by Unit 42 was leaked by a disgruntled employee of one of his customers.

As payloads allow Nayak to see who they are licensed to, he was able to identify and revoke the license. However, according to [AdvIntel](#) CEO Vitali Kremez, ex-Conti ransomware members have also started to acquire licenses by creating fake US companies to pass the licensing verification system.

"The criminals behind the former Conti ransomware operations explored multiple penetration testing kits beyond usage of Cobalt Strike," Kremez told BleepingComputer in a conversation.

"In one particular case, they have gained access to the Brute Ratel kit that was used for post-exploitation in targeted attacks from BumbleBee loader. The ultimate goal of the Brute Ratel usage was post-exploitation framework for lateral movement and subsequent network encryption via ransomware payload."

"To get access to the Brute Ratel licenses, the threat actors create fake US companies which are used as part of the verification process."

BleepingComputer reached out to Brute Ratel's creator, Chetan Nayak, with questions regarding the verification process but has not heard back.

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HEADLINE	07/06 Malware attack strikes IT services giant
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/it-services-giant-shi-hit-by-professional-malware-attack/
GIST	SHI International, a New Jersey-based provider of Information Technology (IT) products and services, has confirmed that a malware attack hit its network over the weekend.

SHI claims to be one of North America's largest IT solutions providers, with \$12.3 billion in revenue in 2021 and 5,000 employees around the world in operations centers in the U.S., the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands.

It also says it provides services to over 15,000 corporate, enterprise, public sector, and academic customer organizations worldwide.

"Over the Fourth of July holiday weekend, SHI was the target of a coordinated and professional malware attack," SHI said in a statement.

"Thanks to the quick reactions of the security and IT teams at SHI, the incident was swiftly identified and measures were enacted to minimize the impact on SHI's systems and operations."

After the attack, SHI added a message to its website warning customers and visitors that its information systems were undergoing maintenance due to a "sustained outage."

This message was later replaced with the malware attack statement published on the [company's blog](#).

Since the attack, some website pages are also returning [Amazon CloudFront/S3 SHI errors](#), which persisted until this article was published.

While evaluating its systems' integrity and investigating the security incident, SHI was forced to take some of its systems offline, including the company's public websites and email.

Starting Wednesday morning, SHI's staff brought all email servers shut down after the attack back online. Its IT experts are also working on restoring access to other affected systems on the network.

"While the investigation into the incident is ongoing – and SHI is liaising with federal bodies including the FBI and CISA – there is no evidence to suggest that customer data was exfiltrated during the attack," the company added.

SHI also said that it will keep customers up to date throughout the process and that no third-party systems in its supply chain were affected during the malware attack.

When BleepingComputer reached out earlier today with a request for more details, an SHI spokesperson replied with a link to the statement published on the company's official blog.

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HEADLINE	07/06 Sensitive airport data exposed
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/application-security/cloud-misconfig-exposes-3tb-sensitive-airport-data-amazon-s3-bucket
GIST	<p>A misconfigured Amazon S3 bucket resulted in 3TB of airport data (more than 1.5 million files) being publicly accessible, open, and without an authentication requirement for access, highlighting the dangers of unsecured cloud infrastructure within the travel sector.</p> <p>The exposed information, uncovered by Skyhigh Security, includes employee personal identification information (PII) and other sensitive company data affecting at least four airports in Colombia and Peru.</p> <p>The PII ranged from photos of airline employees and national ID cards — which could present a serious threat if leveraged by terrorist groups or criminal organizations — to information about planes, fuel lines, and GPS map coordinates.</p> <p>The bucket (now secured) contained information dating back to 2018, the report says, noting Android mobile apps also were contained within buckets, which security personnel tap to help with incident reporting and data handling.</p>

"Airport security protects the lives of travelers and airport staff," the report [explains](#). "As such, this breach is extremely dangerous with potentially devastating consequences should the bucket's content end up in the wrong hands."

As travel picks up dramatically following restrictions during the pandemic, Fortune Business Insights found that the global [smart airport market](#) size is set to be driven by the rising preference of the masses for air travel. The report also says that the expansion of commercial aviation is set to affect the market positively in the coming years, as airports increasingly turn to cloud service providers to house and process massive amounts of passenger and operational data.

Perhaps it's no wonder that travel-related organizations have been increasingly targeted of late. For instance, airlines have been the target of ransomware this year, including India's low-cost carrier SpiceJet, which [weathered an attack](#) in May that caused widespread flight delays.

At the same time, multiple cybercrime groups have been spotted selling stolen credentials and other sensitive PII pilfered from travel-related websites and cloud databases, according to security firm [Intel 471's tracking](#).

Cloud Security Still Porous

Back in 2019, [Gartner stated that](#) "90% of organizations that fail to control public cloud use will inappropriately share sensitive data." And that worry continues today: A recent IDC survey of CISOs in the US found that 80% of respondents are not able to identify excessive access to sensitive data in cloud production environments.

"Unfortunately, news headlines like these highlight examples of a data breach due to a simple, but harmful misconfiguration: an unsecured, exposed cloud storage service," according to Skyhigh's analysis.

"Complexities around identity management, access permissions, secure configurations, data protection, and so much more, continuously result in poor cloud security hygiene and ultimately, data exposures."

And indeed, there has been no shortage of cloud security incidents recently — with [misconfigurations leading the way](#). Cybercrime goals in subverting open databases can go beyond data pilfering, it should be noted, as shown by the [recent discovery](#) of Denonia, a Go-language-based cryptominer malware. It's designed to exploit AWS Lambda, the serverless function execution service.

Also, vulnerabilities in cloud products and services have become a growing concern for organizations, with a Linux container-escape flaw in Microsoft's Azure Service Fabric among the latest vulnerabilities [disclosed](#).

The good news? One potential cloud security resource was recently established by security researchers at Wiz in the form of a [community-based database](#) — [cloudvulndb.org](#) — which currently lists some 70 cloud security issues and vulnerabilities.

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HEADLINE	07/07 Cyberattacks against law enforcement rise
SOURCE	https://www.helpnetsecurity.com/2022/07/07/cyberattacks-against-law-enforcement-rise/?web_view=true
GIST	<p>Resecurity, a Los Angeles-based cybersecurity company protecting Fortune 500 companies worldwide, has registered an increase in malicious activity targeting law enforcement agencies at the beginning of Q2 2022. Threat actors are hacking email and other accounts which belong to law enforcement officers and their internal systems.</p> <p>The emerging trend consists of threat actors sending fake subpoenas and EDR's (Emergency Data Requests) to their victims from the hacked law enforcement email accounts. Using such capabilities, the threat actors are targeting major technology companies such as Apple, Facebook (Meta), Snapchat, and Discord are to name a few, to collect sensitive information about targets of interest. The replies received</p>

by the bad actors contain sensitive details which could/are being used for leverage extortion, or cyberespionage. Such incidents have become especially notable in cybercriminal group activities such as LAPSUS\$ and Recursion Group.

Resecurity has been observing multiple Dark Web marketplaces where cybercriminals are monetizing their efforts by selling credentials belonging to police officers of various foreign countries (e-mails, VPNs, SSO, etc.). One example of an email account previously used to send fake EDR requests on behalf of the Bangladesh Police was recently covered in a Bloomberg article illustrating the risk of such tactics.

Based on experts' opinion, one of the biggest concerns is the visible insecurity of the law enforcement IT infrastructure, such infrastructure creates significant risk to our society, not just in cyberspace but in real life too. Organized crime, terrorists and extremist groups may leverage such access for malicious purposes. The trend is continuing to grow in popularity as more law enforcement organizations have been impacted by cyberattacks this month. Just recently, the Conti ransomware group claimed to attack the Intelligence Agency in Peru and leaked their data which created a significant precedent in the security community. DDOS Secrets – another notable group of threat actors, has released 285,635 leaked emails from Nauru Police.

The most typical scenarios involving attacks on law enforcement systems include:

- Protest activity (15%)
- Unauthorized access (25%)
- Cyberespionage (40%)
- Law enforcement systems and applications abuse (8%)
- Data theft (12%)

Based on the published research, such malicious activity is especially visible in countries of Latin America, South-East Asia, and offshore jurisdictions. Last year, Resecurity registered a targeted security incident related to one of the law enforcement organizations in the Middle East and its counterpart in the face of one of the international police organizations.

“Sophisticated bad actors and APT groups are actively targeting law enforcement agencies worldwide. Traditional cybercriminals are also an important component in this process, as state-supported actors may be actively collaborating with them for further planned cyberattacks and targeted network intrusions. Investigation of such incidents is a complicated process due to the significant sensitivity involved,” said Christian Lees, CTO of Resecurity.

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HEADLINE	07/06 Cybersecurity Advisory: Maui ransomware
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/federal-pages/dhs/cisa-fbi-and-treasury-release-advisory-on-north-korean-state-sponsored-cyber-actors-use-of-maui-ransomware/
GIST	<p>The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the U.S. Department of the Treasury (Treasury) today released a joint Cybersecurity Advisory (CSA) that provides information on Maui ransomware, which has been used by North Korean state-sponsored cyber actors since at least May 2021 to target Healthcare and Public Health (HPH) Sector organizations.</p> <p>The CSA titled, “North Korean State-Sponsored Cyber Actors Use Maui Ransomware to Target the Healthcare and Public Health Sector,” provides technical details and indicators of compromise (IOC) observed during multiple FBI incident response activities over a period of more than a year and obtained from industry analysis of Maui samples. North Korean state-sponsored actors were observed using Maui ransomware to encrypt HPH servers responsible for providing healthcare services. In some cases, the malicious activity disrupted the services provided by the victim for prolonged periods.</p> <p>“As the nation’s cyber defense agency, our team works tirelessly in collaboration with partners to publish timely information that can help organizations prevent and build resilience against all cyber threats,” said CISA’s Executive Assistant Director for Cybersecurity, Eric Goldstein. “Today’s advisory comes out of</p>

our strong partnership with the FBI and Treasury. This malicious activity by North Korean state-sponsored cyber actors against the healthcare and public health sector poses a significant risk to organizations of all sizes.”

“The FBI, along with our federal partners, remains vigilant in the fight against North Korea’s malicious cyber threats to our healthcare sector,” said FBI Cyber Division Assistant Director Bryan Vorndran. “We are committed to sharing information and mitigation tactics with our private sector partners to assist them in shoring up their defenses and protecting their systems.”

“Ransomware victimizes people and businesses, large and small, across America. Treasury has worked closely with CISA and FBI to counter ransomware and protect financial sector critical infrastructure,” said Rahul Prabhakar, Treasury Deputy Assistant Secretary for Cybersecurity and Critical Infrastructure Protection. “This joint advisory on Maui ransomware provides guidance that organizations of all sizes across the country can use to help defend themselves. We will continue to work closely with our partners to push out actionable information on ransomware and other malicious activity as quickly as possible to help individuals and businesses guard against ever-evolving cyber threats.”

The HPH Sector, as well as other critical infrastructure organizations, are urged to review this joint CSA and apply the recommended mitigations to reduce the likelihood of compromise from ransomware operations. The FBI, CISA, and Treasury assess that North Korean state-sponsored actors are likely to continue targeting HPH Sector organizations, because of the assumption that these organizations are willing to pay ransoms to avoid disruption of the critical life and health services they provide. For more information on state-sponsored North Korean malicious cyber activity, see CISA’s [North Korea Cyber Threat Overview and Advisories](#) webpage.

The FBI, CISA, and Treasury strongly discourage paying ransoms as doing so does not guarantee files and records will be recovered and may pose sanctions risks. In September 2021, Treasury [issued an advisory](#) highlighting the sanctions risk associated with ransomware payments and providing steps that can be taken by companies to mitigate the risk of being a victim of ransomware.

All organizations should share information on cybersecurity incidents and anomalous activity to CISA 24/7 Operations Center at report@cisa.gov or (888) 282-0870 and/or to the FBI via your local FBI field office or the FBI’s 24/7 CyWatch at (855) 292-3937 or CyWatch@fbi.gov.

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[Read more at CISA](#)

HEADLINE	07/06 DHS: ransomware actors less tech-savvy
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/featured/ransomware-actors-with-very-low-level-skills-committing-more-attacks-dhs-official-says/
GIST	<p>Ransomware tools are opening up the field to a growing number of less tech-savvy actors even as many ransomware operations have increased in sophistication, DHS Assistant Secretary for Cyber, Infrastructure, Risk and Resilience Iranga Kahangama told Congress.</p> <p>“I think it’s appropriate to liken a ransomware organization almost to a modern-day mob or mafia,” Kahangama said June 28 at a Michigan field hearing of the House Homeland Subcommittee on Intelligence and Counterterrorism on combating ransomware. “It’s very large structures. There is something called ransomware as a service, in which you break up a ransomware attack into different parts. There is initial access. There is deploying malware. There’s getting the money. These are kits that you can literally buy online. And as a result, anyone with very basic technical knowledge can become a ransomware operator, unfortunately. And so with this lowest common denominator environment, you have a proliferation of individuals who are seeking to conduct these attacks.”</p> <p>“And the fact is that they like to do one of these and two of these in very small increments, in order to not go on the radar, to be undercover a little bit,” he added. “And so I think you have ransomware actors growing in terms of their sophistication, but at the same time the tools they have are becoming quite basic.</p>

And so you have very low-level people conducting these attacks at a much higher frequency, with a wide availability of these tools. So it's a growing issue."

Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency Deputy Executive Assistant Director for Cybersecurity Matt Hartman told lawmakers that the Cyber Incident Reporting for Critical Infrastructure Act recently passed by Congress is "going to be monumental in terms of the federal government being able to understand what is happening from a ransomware and a broader cybersecurity perspective, and cyber incident perspective, as well as take action as a U.S. government to deter future attacks."

"With respect to the implementation of the legislation, we are in the process of a very thorough and rigorous rulemaking process," he said. "We intend to really find the sweet spot between in implementation between defining the types of incidents that need to be reported to the federal government and when, to allow victim organizations to focus on restoring their systems and data, but also in sufficient time providing the information to the federal government so we can limit the impact of a potential campaign and help the broader community."

DHS intends to finish that rulemaking within 24 months and work with partners at the FBI to "make sure that when CISA receives information about ransomware or other cybersecurity incidents from all sectors, that we are quickly sharing that information back with the FBI, with the Sector Risk Management Agency from any of the 16 sectors, and with appropriate state and local authorities so that we as a community can take action to combat this problem."

Kahangama, who used to be director for cyber incident response at the National Security Council, started at the Department of Homeland Security in May.

"We want to minimize the risk posed from cyberattacks, and we want to ensure the resilience of critical services that are provided to this country," Kahangama said.

Ransomware attacks, he stressed, "do not discriminate: They target large and small targets, whether it's large corporations, small and medium enterprises, hospitals, local governments or schools." And often, "the cost of cleaning up an attack can be more expensive than paying the ransom itself or to provide mitigating services beforehand."

DHS is "rapidly increasing our ability to investigate cryptocurrency because it is the preferred payment method for ransomware actors," he said, with the department "actively getting tools and learning how to track and trace cryptocurrency so that we can better disrupt and potentially claw back some of this money." One challenge is that ransomware actors "are often in permissive environments that do not cooperate with us, including Russia."

Asked about lessons learned from recent high-profile ransomware attacks on critical infrastructure such as Colonial Pipeline and JBS Foods, Kahangama emphasized that "no matter how big an organization you are, the smallest cyber vulnerability can be quite damaging."

"And I think it's also important to understand the connection between regular systems that you may use for HR or doing paychecks, versus all the operational components," he added. "I think in both of those instances with Colonial and JBS, we saw very relatively small attacks that targeted like a payroll system, and then out of an abundance of caution, the entire enterprise shut down. So I think we're all susceptible to the lowest common denominator of cybersecurity that's provided."

"The other thing I want to mention is that ransomware attackers are quite vigilant, and they are looking for businesses and services that they know will want to pay."

Hartman pointed to four things "that every organization, large or small, should consider, and this is as applicable to farmers and schools as it is to the Colonial Pipelines and the JBS Foods": implementing multi-factor authentication, maintaining offline encrypted backups (and "periodically and regularly test

that you are able to recover to these backups, so if your data is encrypted, you are not forced with a decision of whether to pay or not”), developing an incident response plan, and reporting incidents to CISA.

“This is important for two reasons. First, if we do not know, we can’t help,” he said. “Secondarily, if we do not know the tactics that are being used, if we do not know the infrastructure that is being used, we cannot share that information in an anonymized fashion more broadly to protect the community.”

“So, get to know your local cybersecurity advisors from CISA. Get to know your FBI field offices. The real important thing is that you contact one of us. And then on the back end, we will work within the Department of Homeland Security, with our peers at FBI, to make sure that we can provide all of the assistance of the federal government.”

Hartman told lawmakers that “ransomware and the threat of cyberattack are top-of-mind concerns to schools, to hospitals, to businesses large and small, and to so many other organizations — that’s why it is important that we empower organizations and Americans to help us raise the cybersecurity baseline.”

“The administration’s approach to countering ransomware is focused on bolstering resilience,” he said. “Strengthening resilience to withstand ransomware attacks is arguably the most difficult element of our collective efforts.”

Hartman said that “every organization that wants to avoid being the victim of ransomware must continuously invest in the practices that will keep their customers, their systems and their data secured.”

“The question that we need to ask ourselves is, what can we do right now to truly have an impact? I’ll point to two things. First, we must give organizations tools and guidance to increase their security and resilience,” he continued. “This is why CISA works every day to raise awareness, and to promote basic cyber hygiene across tens of thousands of businesses and government agencies throughout our country. Organizations need to raise their cybersecurity standards, and the guidance that CISA provides is meant to provide real-time, actionable information to help them do so. For you, that means regularly update your software, think before you click, avoid suspicious links in phishing emails, use strong passwords, and most importantly, implement multifactor authentication. Adding a second factor for login makes you 99 percent less likely to be hacked.”

“Second, we need to partner with the American people, organizations in both the public and private sectors to identify threats and vulnerabilities, to develop guidance, to conduct outreach and to ensure that everyone has the information that they need to make educated cyber risk management decisions.”

Key to this partnership effort has been CISA’s “growing presence outside of Washington, D.C.,” Hartman said, with cybersecurity advisors “now in nearly every state... to provide boots on the ground help to organizations of all sizes to address the growing threat of cyberattack.”

CISA’s Joint Cyber Defense Collaborative was launched to “drive partnership between the federal government and private-sector companies who possess tremendous visibility into domestic networks, to help us identify emerging threats and to provide timely and actionable cybersecurity guidance to reduce the risk of attack for everyone,” and “a great example of this guidance is CISA’s Shields Up messaging campaign which we launched in the lead-up to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.” This has become one of CISA’s most visited pages on CISA.gov.

The StopRansomware.gov collaborative government resource has amassed more than 830,000 views, and the Ransomware Readiness Assessment tool on the site has been downloaded about 15,000 times.

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HEADLINE	07/06 IS claims attack on Nigeria prison
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/07/06/nigeria-prison-attack-frees-hundreds-inmates-islamic-state-claims-responsibility/5321657148829/
GIST	<p>July 6 (UPI) -- A suspected Islamist attack on a prison in Nigeria has freed hundreds of inmates, including militants, government officials said Wednesday.</p> <p>The armed attackers, at the Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre near Nigeria's capital Abuja, detonated several explosives Tuesday to break into the prison and free nearly 900 of the prison's 994 inmates.</p> <p>"They came in numbers, they gained entrance into the prison and they released some of the inmates," Nigeria's defense minister, Bashir Magashi, said at a press briefing Wednesday.</p> <p>One security guard was killed and three others were injured in the attack, according to Shuaib Belgore, permanent secretary at the Interior Ministry.</p> <p>"They came specifically for their co-conspirators, but in order to get them ... some of them are in the general prison population so they broke out and other people in that population escaped as well but many have them have returned," Belgore said.</p> <p>Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari visited the prison Wednesday and tweeted he was "saddened by the attack," while also questioning security.</p> <p>"I am disappointed with the intelligence system. How can terrorists organize, have weapons, attack a security installation and get away with it?" Buhari tweeted. "I am expecting a comprehensive report on this shocking incident."</p> <p>A manhunt was underway Wednesday for more than half of the 879 escaped inmates, as the rest were recaptured.</p> <p>"They have reported themselves to the police, some we have successfully retrieved from the bushes where they were hiding," Belgore said.</p> <p>"The situation is under control," said Magashi, who speculated the gunmen belonged to Boko Haram. The attack was later claimed by Islamic State.</p> <p>Attacks on prisons to free inmates in Nigeria have become common in recent years. Last year, nearly 2,000 prisoners broke out of jail in southeast Nigeria after gunmen blew open a prison wall with explosives. More than 7,000 inmates escaped Nigerian prisons between 2010 and 2021, according to an Al Jazeera analysis of official escapee numbers.</p> <p>At the Kuje Medium Prison near Abuja, "the armed squad of the Nigerian Correctional Service and other security agencies attached to the Custodial centre have responded," a prison service spokesman said in a statement Wednesday.</p> <p>"Calm has been restored to the facility and the situation is under control."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/06 'Suspicious activity reports' target Muslims
SOURCE	https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/suspicious-activity-reports-led-to-racial-profiling-in-chicago-58615
GIST	Reports for suspicious activity disproportionately targeted Muslims in Chicago, raising concerns about state surveillance, according to a city-based non-profit.

Muslim organisations are calling for law enforcement to stop using 'Suspicious activity reports' after an investigation [revealed](#) that the people of Middle Eastern descent were disproportionately targeted and racially profiled in Chicago.

Arab American Action Network (AAAN) obtained 235 Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs) created by the Illinois State Police (ISP) and the Chicago Police Department (CDP) through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

The organisation said more than fifty percent of the people who were reported for "suspicious activities" between 2016 and 2020 were either Muslims or those with an olive skin tone generally associated with the Middle Eastern people.

AAAN held a news conference on July 1 in the presence of community leaders, law enforcement officials and locals. The report angered Chicago Muslims.

"We will fight day and night to protect our rights," a group of about a dozen people chanted at Federal Plaza.

The organisation says that is a pattern that was a clear result of the United States' counter-terrorism steps in the wake of the September 11 attacks. The government established a national network of so-called "fusion centers" to exchange information about terrorism. However, the SARs, the documents created when people report suspicious activity, kept Muslim communities in focus.

Chicago Muslim and Arab researchers argue that these fusion centers and reports lead to criminalisation of communities of colour, as they have become tools of racial profiling. The law enforcement reports reveal a disturbing pattern of marking Muslims for simply speaking their native language on the phone, such as Arabic or taking photos.

"These reports show what every person in our communities knows all too well — that our community continues to be treated with suspicion," said Muhammad Sankari, who worked on the report.

In one incident that AAAN noted, a plumber reported to the police in 2016 that "several Muslims were living" in the house where he attended plumbing problems and that his clients had "several maps" that were marked with flags and had "writings on them in what looked like Arabic."

Another SARs report was on a man who looked either Hispanic or Middle Eastern for watching people bowl and play video games at a bowling alley.

A concerned citizen warned police in 2016 that two men and a boy, all of whom looked Middle Eastern, were sitting on a bench at a train station during rush hour in two different incidents. One had a black bag.

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HEADLINE	07/06 Feds: neo-Nazi Satanist cult is terror group
SOURCE	https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-news/neo-nazi-1378280/
GIST	<p>In the end, the self-professed traitor blinked. On Friday, June 24, former Army Pvt. Ethan Melzer pleaded guilty to three terrorism-related federal charges for a macabre, Satanist-inspired plot to have his former unit attacked by jihadi militants during a deployment overseas in 2020. The thin, bearded 24-year-old entered his change of plea in the Lower Manhattan courtroom of U.S. District Judge Gregory Woods a little over two years since his high-profile arrest in June 2020, and just 11 days before the scheduled start of what would've been a first in American jurisprudence: the federal government's foremost terrorism prosecutors trying an adherent of the shadowy Far Right Order of Nine Angles (O9A) sect.</p> <p>The Order of Nine Angles, founded in the 1960s by British Satanists, has spread throughout the world in the succeeding decades. Over the past five years, the ideology became intertwined with neo-fascist terrorist groups like the Atomwaffen Division, National Action, and the Base. O9A's followers stand</p>

accused of murder, pedophilia, rape, terrorism, and other crimes in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Russia, and elsewhere. The Federal Bureau of Investigation also indirectly helped accelerate the spread of O9A by employing Joshua Caleb Sutter, the head of the Tempel ov Blood nexion and prolific publisher of O9A-related books through his Martinet Press imprint, as a paid [informant](#) for almost 20 years.

Melzer's conviction is significant: He embodied the worst fears of military and law-enforcement leaders of an "inside threat" intent on inflicting lethal harm on his fellow Americans. Melzer even joined the military in what O9A refers to as an "insight role" to gain weapons and tactical training while using his position in the Army to subvert or damage the institution. The former soldier's conviction is the first time American authorities have articulated and prosecuted actions driven by a Satanist sect that has inspired millenarian neo-Nazi domestic terrorists and led to several homicides overseas. British law enforcement is so alarmed by the noxious ideology that the Home Office is under pressure to formally ban the Order of Nine Angles as they have done to Al Qaeda, National Action, and other terrorist groups. The importance of Melzer's case was signaled by the dozens of federal law-enforcement officers in plainclothes present in court last Friday to watch the disgraced G.I. plead guilty.

Furthermore, federal prosecutors have used this case to establish legal precedent for the Order of Nine Angles as an extremist ideology now officially linked to a terrorism conviction. In both the presentation of Assistant U.S. Attorney Matthew Hellman on June 24 and the expert testimony a month prior of Dr. Pete Simi, an academic specializing in right-wing extremism, a formal record was made not only of Melzer's ties to the ideology, but specifics of its origins, influence on the contemporary far right at large, practices and goals, and how the former soldier's actions comported with the Satanist cult's "social Darwinist" principles, as Dr. Simi testified on May 24th. One of the counts Melzer pleaded guilty to, [providing material support for a terrorist organization](#), states that people found to have violated this particular code "must have knowledge that the organization is a designated terrorist organization." Crucially, his plot involved providing classified material to a purported member of Al Qaeda about his unit's movement, in hopes that Islamist militants would carry out an ambush. In their [formal press release](#) about Melzer's guilty plea, the United States attorney for the Southern District of New York placed heavy emphasis on Melzer's involvement with O9A, which, they stated, traces back to 2017. In short, Melzer's case is now the precedent that formally connects O9A to terrorism in the American court system, putting the Satanist cult on par with the jihadis Melzer hoped would kill his fellow soldiers.

"O9A has a significant influence especially among [neo-Nazis](#) who promote terrorism and has been connected to the beliefs of more than one murderer," said Spencer Sunshine, a longtime researcher of right-wing extremism. However, Sunshine cautioned that the Satanist cult's amorphous nature and lack of formal structure meant that it differed sharply from other groups. "But since O9A is highly decentralized, if entities like this are added to the list, it will also be a step into murky waters that those in the government who deal with terrorism will have to wrangle with."

In Britain, where the Order of Nine Angles was founded, law enforcement has dealt with the ideology in a number of recent terrorism prosecutions, and Parliament has heard calls to formally ban O9A as extremism. Nick Lowles, the chief executive of the U.K. anti-hate organization Hope Not Hate, hailed Melzer's trial as a watershed moment.

"There are several countries in Europe and North America where O9A supporters have been involved in terrorist attacks and encouraging extreme violence and terrorism, but because of the international nature of the group and its non-hierarchical and fluid structure, many governments have struggled to properly characterize O9A as they should," Lowles said. "Hopefully, the actions of federal prosecutors in the U.S. will now give encouragement to others to follow suit."

However, there is reticence about the adoption of a "war on terror" framework to combatting O9A. "What the government wants through these designations is expanded surveillance powers," says Hannah Gais, a senior researcher at the Southern Poverty Law Center. "The harm that Order of Nine

Angles adherents and proponents have perpetrated cannot be healed through designating it as a terrorist organization.”

Given O9A’s current influence on right-wing extremists, law enforcement will almost certainly investigate and prosecute adherents of the ideology in future criminal cases. Indeed, in New York City’s other federal jurisdiction, the Eastern District of New York, prosecutors have divulged O9A-related evidence in the gun possession case of [Angel Almeida](#), a Queens man who also professed a desire to sexually abuse young women. Almeida was also found in possession of a Tempel ov Blood banner and ToB patches — the proceeds of which would benefit FBI informant Joshua Sutter.

In the past half-decade, young Neo-Nazi propagandists associated with or aping the Atomwaffen Division and the Base have used social media to saturate extreme right-wing channels with O9A imagery and texts, relying heavily on the industrial-meets-horrorcore aesthetic of Sutter’s Tempel ov Blood. Pushing rape, child abuse, murder, and manipulation vaults young edgelords like Almeida to online notoriety. With Melzer and incarcerated members of the Atomwaffen Division and the Base, those transgressive ideas came dangerously close to grievous real-world consequences. While the former soldier will end up in federal prison, where O9A adherents like [John Cameron Denton](#) and [Kaleb Cole](#) of AWD are currently serving time, Joshua Sutter, the FBI informant and leading O9A proselytizer, is a free man and still selling Satanist books.

The FBI offered no comment in response to questions about Sutter’s work with the bureau or his role in spreading O9A ideology in recent years. Sutter’s work as an informant is still bearing fruit: His “Swiss Discipline” alias [appears in encrypted Wire chats](#) from the Atomwaffen Division’s successor group, the National Socialist Order, that led to Aubrey Sakai Suzuki, a young Mississippi man, [pleading guilty last month](#) to threatening death upon Blacks, Latinos, homosexuals, and other marginalized groups.

Prior to Melzer’s change of heart, his federal defenders Johnathan Marvinny and Ariel Werner were preparing a quixotic line of defense that hewed to the approach taken by former NYPD Gilberto Valle, the “Cannibal Cop” whose conviction for plotting to murder, cook, and eat several women (including his wife) was [overturned](#) by a federal appeals court for lack of proof that he would actually carry out his “fantasy role-play,” according to an opinion by Judge Paul Gardephe.

Melzer’s case turned on blood-soaked Satanist texts and insignia recovered from his barracks, and most importantly, reams of encrypted Telegram chats found on his two iPhones with other members of an O9A cell, or “nexion,” called “Rapewaffen.” Court filings over the past two years have laid out the scope of Melzer’s extremely lurid conversations with other members of this nexion, which included a mentally ill Canadian teenager who posed as a former paratrooper, an alleged member of the Grey Wolves, an ultra-nationalist terrorist group based in Turkey, and a person who went by the alias “Red Hourglass” — and, per defense filings, was the government’s confidential source.

The communications divulged piecemeal in the docket, according to the government, show Melzer wanted to have his unit attacked and sent classified information to his erstwhile co-conspirators, including grid coordinates for the base he’d be stationed at, particulars of his unit’s travel, satellite photographs of the facility and terrain, and specifics about the defensive armaments of himself and his fellow soldiers. Marvinny and Werner’s defense strategy would essentially portray Melzer’s actions as fantasy, relying on the expert testimony of Dr. David Greenfield, a longtime professor of psychiatry at the University of Connecticut’s School of Medicine and the founder of the [Center for Internet and Technology Addiction](#).

During the June 16th hearing, Greenfield compared the behavior of so-called internet addicts to compulsive gamblers, and claimed the purported anonymity of the internet led to people dropping their inhibitions and taking on roles they would never fulfill in real life. “On the internet, there are no checks and balances — you can be anything you want, say anything you want, and there’s nothing to verify it,” he told the court. This would’ve been the crux of the defense approach: that Melzer had abhorrent

views and associations, but was living an online fantasy and didn't pose an actual threat to his fellow soldiers.

However, the filings and presentation of Assistant United States Attorneys Matthew Hellman, Sam Adelsburg, and Kimberly Ravener in the run-up to Melzer's trial date portrayed a starkly different picture. The prosecutors were prepared to call Melzer's former commanding officer and comrades in the 173rd Airborne Brigade to testify about the potential damage the attack could've caused. Evidence about Melzer's radicalization, including his own statements about O9A involvement: "Always working on some form of insight role," he wrote on Telegram to the teenage administrator of the Rapewaffen channel, essentially admitting he was a hostile infiltrator. And there was also evidence of Melzer's self-initiation long before his enlistment in the military, including the Satanist group's texts and photographic evidence of alleged blood rituals.

More damaging, the government's investigation also turned up evidence that Melzer had allegedly committed not one, but two shootings as a juvenile in Louisville, Kentucky: one on Jan. 9, 2018, when Melzer shot another person during a marijuana deal outside his apartment complex, and a second shooting from 2015 or 2016 during a robbery which Melzer bragged about to a roommate. The government sought to have two witnesses testify, including Melzer's former roommate who lived with him after dropping out from high school in 10th grade. An open-records request to the Louisville Metropolitan Police Department yielded no record of the incident.

Melzer presented none of that menace in Judge Woods' 12th-floor courtroom last week. Dressed in beige jail scrubs from the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn where he is being housed, Melzer spoke softly in response to Judge Woods' questions, often touching a tattoo on his left forearm of two inset circles and an eight-pointed star that closely resembles a [chaos symbol](#).

After the former private stated his guilty plea, Judge Woods asked if he had anything to say about the crimes he had sought to carry out.

"I'm sorry, and I regret every single thing that I did," Melzer said.

He is facing up to 45 years in federal prison on all counts — less than the potential life sentence he risked if found guilty after a jury trial. Judge Woods will decide Melzer's fate during a hearing early next year. The proceedings are scheduled for an auspicious date: Jan. 6, 2023.

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HEADLINE	07/07 HRW: Taliban execute, 'disappear' suspects
SOURCE	https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/07/07/afghanistan-taliban-execute-disappear-alleged-militants
GIST	<p>(New York) – Taliban security forces have summarily executed and forcibly disappeared alleged members and supporters of an Islamic State offshoot in eastern Afghanistan, Human Rights Watch said today. Since the Taliban took power in August 2021, residents of Nangahar and Kunar provinces east of Kabul have discovered the bodies of more than 100 men dumped in canals and other locations.</p> <p>Taliban forces have carried out abusive search operations, including night raids, against residents they accuse of sheltering or supporting members of the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) armed group, the Afghan affiliate of the Islamic State (ISIS). During these raids, Taliban forces have beaten residents and have detained men they accuse of being ISKP members without legal process or revealing their whereabouts to their families. An unknown number have been summarily executed – shot, hanged, or beheaded – or forcibly disappeared.</p> <p>"We investigated an emptied canal in Nangarhar in which over 100 bodies have been dumped between August 2021 and April 2022," said Patricia Gossman, associate Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "Taliban authorities appear to have given their forces free rein to detain, 'disappear,' and kill alleged militants."</p>

Between October 2021 and June 2022, Human Rights Watch, working with a local organization that cannot be identified for security reasons, interviewed 63 people, including 42 in person in Nangarhar and Kunar provinces, and 21 by phone.

In November, a team from both groups counted 54 bodies of men, many in an advanced state of decomposition, along a 15 to 20 kilometer stretch of the emptied canal. The bodies showed evidence of torture and brutal executions: some had missing limbs, ropes around their necks, or had been beheaded or had slit throats. Healthcare workers in Nangarhar said that they had registered 118 bodies that had been found across the province between August and December.

A media report cited one Taliban fighter who said, “We conduct night raids and whenever we find a Daesh [ISIS] member, we just kill them.” The United Nations has reported that Taliban operations against ISKP “rely heavily on extra-judicial detentions and killings.”

Over a number of years ISKP has carried out bombings particularly targeting Hazara, Shia, and other religious minority communities, as well as against Taliban and former government forces. The armed group springs from a minority violent stream of Salafism, a movement that looks back to the earliest years of Islam for moral guidance.

Human Rights Watch has previously documented Taliban forces summarily executing or forcibly disappearing former Afghan government officials and security forces. The cases from eastern Afghanistan demonstrate that Taliban forces have extended such atrocities to those they accuse of links to ISKP, Human Rights Watch said.

International humanitarian law, or the laws of war, which applies to the armed conflict between the Taliban and ISKP, obligates all parties to treat everyone in custody humanely. Arbitrary detentions, summary executions, and other forms of mistreatment are prohibited, and those responsible are subject to prosecution for war crimes. Also prohibited are enforced disappearances, which international law defines as the detention of anyone by state forces or their agents followed by a refusal to acknowledge the detention or whereabouts of the person.

Suspected ISKP members taken into custody for criminal offenses should be promptly brought before a judge, appropriately charged, provided access to relatives and legal counsel, and prosecuted in accordance with international fair trial standards.

“The ISKP’s numerous atrocities do not justify the Taliban’s horrific response,” Gossman said. “Taliban forces have repeatedly carried out summary executions and other war crimes against people in their custody and have yet to hold those responsible to account.”

Human Rights Watch and the local organization found substantial evidence of summary executions and enforced disappearances by the Taliban of people accused of supporting the ISKP. There was extensive evidence from the Darunta Canal, near Jalalabad, which the groups visited and where they documented scores of killings by inspecting corpses discovered there in late 2021. The interviews revealed that many of those killed were people whom the Taliban had earlier taken into custody.

Taliban-ISKP Conflict in Nangarhar and Kunar

Taliban forces took control of Nangarhar’s capital, Jalalabad, on August 15, 2021, the same day they took power in Kabul. In the ensuing months, Taliban security forces carried out search operations to apprehend and detain former members of the Afghan National Security Forces and ISKP members.

When ISKP attacks on Taliban forces continued after August, particularly in Nangarhar’s eastern districts of Dehbala, Shinwar Mohmand Dara, Achin, and Kama, the Taliban intensified their campaign against ISKP. In November the Taliban deployed hundreds of fighters against ISKP forces. Taliban officials in statements to the media have claimed that their forces have “eliminated” ISKP “98 percent,” and that the

group is “no longer considered a serious threat in Afghanistan.” However, the alleged brutality with which the Taliban has conducted operations may spark increased recruitment to ISKP in the province.

On several occasions, Taliban officials claimed to have seriously degraded or destroyed ISKP. However, ISKP forces have continued to attack Taliban units, typically by means of magnetic improvised explosive devices (IEDs), roadside bombs, and hit-and-run assaults on Taliban checkpoints. They have also continued their unlawful bombings of Hazara and Shia communities, killing and maiming numerous civilians.

Taliban Night Raids and Collective Punishment

Since taking power, Taliban forces have conducted night raids in residential areas, a tactic that has long been a feature of counterinsurgency operations by all parties in the Afghanistan conflict. These raids have frequently included abuses.

The Taliban have targeted many neighborhoods known for being home to Salafists, a community that follows a form of Islam modeled on the beliefs and practices of the earliest Muslims of the 7th century. These raids appear aimed not only against ISKP fighters, but also to punish residents who may have no involvement with ISKP because of their adherence to Salafism.

From September through November, Nangarhar and Kunar residents reported a wave of Taliban operations and the enforced disappearance and killing of Salafis. In some cases, relatives alleged that the Taliban took away their family members, and afterward denied that the men were in their custody. In other cases, residents said they found the bodies of relatives who had been taken away. Some were reportedly found beheaded.

Residents from Kunar province, a province that has long seen conflict between the Taliban and the former government, ISKP, or other armed groups, said they were being targeted. They said Taliban fighters stopped and questioned men on the streets, sometimes beating or humiliating them in public if the Taliban discovered or suspected the men were Salafists.

One man said: “Kunar is cannot say anything [about this treatment]. If you do, they say you are Daesh [ISIS].” A man from Marawara district, Kunar province, who had been stopped by the Taliban in Jalalabad said: “When they found out that I am Salafi, they shaved my beard and head in front hundreds of people and made me sit there for hours.”

Salafi elders said that because of the continued raids, Salafi community elders in a number of districts felt pressure to pledge their support to the Taliban authorities. The Taliban have also registered members of Salafi communities, which, among other things, facilitates Taliban monitoring of community members.

While there are no verified numbers of those killed and forcibly disappeared since August 2021, bodies of some victims have been displayed in various parts of Jalalabad and the surrounding area. Between August and December in the Farm Adda park, south of Jalalabad, local residents and relatives said that while looking for missing family members they found bodies of people whom the Taliban had taken hanging from trees. Taliban officials have acknowledged that they have displayed bodies along main roads and intersections as a warning to others that “this is what happens” if you join the ISKP. Family members have found the bodies of their relatives in the neighborhood known as Khalis Baba in Khogyani. Others have discovered bodies in canals and rivers.

Disentangling the killings of former Afghan government security force members from those accused of being linked to ISKP is difficult, although they follow somewhat different patterns. When the Taliban have targeted former security force members, they appear to single people out based on the position they previously held, or because they were known to Taliban fighters and commanders in the area.

Community elders, family members of victims, and analysts who have studied ISKP said that the Taliban frequently carried out mass arrests based on guilt by association rather than any determination of ISKP

links. Many of the Salafists detained appear to have been picked up because they lived in certain neighborhoods or Salafist villages. Community elders and family members said that bodies found often had distinctive clothing, long beards, and other typically Salafist characteristics.

A health worker at a local hospital said that by late December, hospital staff had registered 118 dead bodies that had been found across Nangarhar, and that most people who came to inquire about the bodies were from Kunar, Jalalabad city, and districts surrounding Jalalabad. It is likely that not all bodies found would be registered or taken to a hospital.

Darunta Canal

The Darunta Canal flows from a hydroelectric power plant seven kilometers west of Jalalabad in Nangarhar province. In the early morning of November 7, local officials stopped the flow of water through the dam in response to a request from residents living along the canal who wanted to retrieve the body of a boy who had drowned a day earlier. Once the flow through the dam stopped, the entire canal dried up.

A team from Human Rights Watch and the Afghan organization carried out an investigation along the canal on the morning of November 7, covering about 15 to 20 kilometers of the canal by car over 2 hours and 30 minutes. The team counted 54 bodies – all male – in the emptied canal. While it was difficult to determine ages, none appeared to be older than about 50. Fifteen bodies were considered to be in a very advanced state of decomposition. Seven had been beheaded and others had their throats slit but had not been decapitated. Two had ropes around their necks, suggesting that they had been hanged before being thrown into the canal. Some bodies had limbs missing. Only a few had visible bullet wounds, although this could not be determined with accuracy since some were badly decomposed.

The team interviewed residents living along the canal, one of whom directed them to a location called Muqam Khan, close to the Sarhadi Lewa, a Taliban military installation. In this area, bodies were visible in the dried canal bed. Some were scattered and others grouped together. Some appeared to have been in the water for some time, based on their advanced state of decomposition.

The residents said that since August 2021, the canal had become well-known as a place to dispose of bodies. Five families living along the canal confirmed that they had seen bodies when the water was drained. “Most were thrown into the canal between August and November, when the Taliban were detaining and disappearing men accused of being ISKP,” one resident said.

Another resident said that there had been at least five IED attacks against the Taliban in the Muqam Khan area after August, and the Taliban might have dumped the bodies there to send a message.

“Habib,” a pseudonym, who is a resident of Surkhrod district, said:

When the canal dried up, 10 bodies were found near Kabul Adda [the station for Kabul-bound buses]. This area of the canal, called “barong,” has a net that prevents trash or other material from entering and blocking the canal; the bodies were stuck in the net. Word got out and the Taliban came and would not allow people to come near. An hour later, an ambulance came and took the bodies away. Some of the bodies were headless; some were rotten, and discolored. Most of the bodies were unidentifiable. I think these people were thrown into the canal at this place.

While many bodies were recovered on November 7, people continued to find bodies afterward. Later in November, Habib was bathing in the canal after working as a day laborer. He said, “Something soft touched me. It was wrapped up like a parcel, a body was inside. My colleague and I took it to the hospital.”

“Zekirya”, a resident of Nazrabad Kalay, Surkhorud district, also recovered bodies from the canal. He saw four bodies “stuck in the net in the canal on November 7, 2021.”

“Sadullah,” a day laborer from Tatang Kala, Surkhorud district, found bodies in the canal in late November. He said:

We were cleaning the canal when my friends found two wrapped objects. The bodies were inside. They were attached with stones before being thrown in the water. The bodies smelled and appeared to have been in the water for days. Some people had gathered around who took the bodies to the hospital [morgue].

The body of a man named Wahabudden, from Fatehabad village, Surkhorod district, was among those found in the canal. Taliban forces had taken him and his brother Gulapudden into custody in mid-October. A Fatehabad resident said:

On November 20, 2021, we found Wahabudden's dead body in the [Darunta] canal, and Gulapudden is still missing. Wahabudden was shot twice in the shoulder, and also his throat was cut. There was also a stone attached to Wahabudden's chest, so his body didn't rise to the surface.

Wahabudden's body was found 13 days after the discovery of most of the other bodies in the canal bed.

“Ahmad,” searched in vain for the body of his brother Nazeerullah, who had been detained by the Taliban on October 7. When he learned from a relative that the water into the Darunta canal would be stopped on November 7, family members came to search. Ahmad said that his relatives had warned him that the bodies would be hard to recognize, but said “our heart could not stop [hoping] so we went.” He described the scene at the canal:

[One] could not recognize most of the bodies. ... They were not all at the same place but spread across the bed of the canal. It is possible they [the Taliban] threw one body here, another somewhere else. The distance between the bodies varied: between some bodies 10 meters, some 100 meters, some even more distant. ... We looked at [almost] the entire canal by car. ... our guy [Nazeerullah] had a scar on one hand, and we were checking the dead bodies for the scar ... I do not remember an exact number, but I am sure close to 100 people were there [in the canal]. I heard some were already taken away by their relatives and other people. Because Nazeerullah had a scar on his arm, we thought we might recognize him. We were there from 9:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. ... Seeing all those dead bodies, it had a huge impact on me, mentally.

He did not find Nazeerullah.

Additional Summary Executions and Enforced Disappearances

“Doctor” Mubariz

According to his patients and others in the community, Mubariz, between 40 and 45 years old, was respected for his knowledge of health care although he did not have a medical degree. He operated private clinics across the east and southeast Afghanistan, including many small clinics in Nangarhar, for which he hired medical staff. The last clinic he opened with one of his colleagues was in the Smarkhail area of Jalalabad city. After August 2021, he continued to run the clinic, as he did the others. Taliban forces took Mubariz and his partner into custody from this clinic in early September. About 10 days later, his body was discovered in Jalalabad with a gunshot wound.

A witness to Mubariz's arrest told the family that “[t]he [Taliban] came in a vehicle that had the markings of the previous government's intelligence agency, the National Directorate of Security (NDS), wearing NDS uniforms. They were members of the Taliban's intelligence forces, the General Directorate of Intelligence.” The family said that they received a call the evening of the arrest informing them that Mubariz had been taken to Amniat-e Milli, the national security district headquarters. The family went to the headquarters and were told Mubariz was there: “We were not allowed to see him, though the Taliban said, ‘He is here with us.’”

Family members said that the next day they returned to the headquarters accompanied by community elders: “We sat next to the door of Amniat-e Milli until our turn came to talk to the officials. But we could

not see Dr. Mubariz.” An official at the gate told the family “You go back home. His case is still [under investigation] but there is nothing in the file [on him].”

About nine days after the arrest, Mubariz called his oldest son at around 10 p.m. He told him: “Son, my heart is suffocated here. No one has beaten me, no one said a bad thing to me. They have been telling me I will be released tomorrow but you should try to release me sooner. Come for me, bring elders to secure my release. They [the Taliban] should punish me if I am guilty of having ties with ISKP.” The family did not know how Mubariz got access to a phone. A Taliban official told us that “Dr. Mubariz did not call from his number but from a new number, which could have been provided by Taliban inside the facility.”

The next day at 9 a.m. the family received a call from neighbors that Mubariz’s body had been found along with two other bodies in the Farm Ada area of Jalalabad. A man who found the bodies said they appeared to have been killed during the night. Mubariz’s body had a letter attached to it that said: “Dr. Mubariz, Daesh surgical doctor,” suggesting he was working for or providing health care to ISKP. A tribal elder said: “This is a lie that he was a Daesh doctor.”

Mubariz’s partner was released but said they had been separated in detention and he did not know what had happened.

International humanitarian law protects all personnel from mistreatment, including those who provide medical care for opposing armed forces or armed groups.

Muhammad Baz

Muhammad Baz was from Badel Valley, Narang district, in Kunar province. His family and community members said he was a Salafist, yet had also fought with the Taliban.

One relative said that on September 20, Baz left his home in Narang district to go on a business-related trip to Spin Boldak, in Kandahar province. The Taliban stopped him at a checkpoint in the Darunta area of Jalalabad city.

He was allowed to call his family and told them that when the Taliban had checked his phone, they found some Salafist material on it. He also told his family that he had contacted Saleh, the district head of intelligence for Narang district and that Saleh had told the Taliban that Baz was a “mujahid,” a member of the Taliban, and not ISKP. But the Taliban who detained Baz said he could not leave.

Baz’s family and friends said that when they tried to call the phone later it was turned off. A cousin went to the Darunta area where Baz was detained. He asked local residents what they had seen. One witness, a merchant, said, “The Taliban detained someone [who matched Baz’s description], put him in a Ranger [truck], and went toward the city [Jalalabad].”

The next day, Baz’s family received a call from a clinic to come to collect the body, which had been found by a driver in the hilly desert areas of Memla in Khogyani district. Baz’s throat had been slit; his name was on a piece of paper attached to the body. His family and others believe that the Taliban killed Baz because he was a Salafist, wore a long beard, and had Salafist material on his phone.

Nazeerullah

Taliban security forces in Kama district, Nangarhar, detained Nazeerullah, on October 7. His brother “Jawad” said:

At around 10:30 a.m., Taliban forces raided our house. They were in two vehicles: a Ranger and a silver Toyota Fielder. Four of them entered the house forcibly and arrested my brother, who is around 43 years old and is a laborer and finds food for his family through hard work. He was taken to the car in front of several witnesses. ... [T]en minutes later the Taliban took two of my sons [Ibrahim and Subhanullah] who were working in the fields near the mosque.

A villager who saw the arrest said that he had asked the Taliban, “‘Where are you taking these boys?’ and they said, ‘We are taking them to the district [center].’”

Jawad said he went immediately to the district center but was not allowed to see any Taliban officials. The next day he tried again, without success. The third day, more family members from Kunar went to the district center and with a guarantee provided by Bakhtiar Rahman, a local influential figure, the Taliban released Ibrahim and Subhanullah.

Jawad said that Qari Yasir, the Taliban’s Kama district police chief, and the head of the General Directorate of Intelligence, Shaheen, told him that the district governor, Hekmat Adil, had ordered the arrest. Jawad said that he went to see Adil, who told him that a battalion from Kabul had come and taken Nazeerullah with them.

Jawad said he then filed petitions first with the Nangarhar provincial governor, Mohammad Daud Muzamil, and then with the deputy governor asking them to order Kama district officials to produce Nazeerullah. He received no response. He then petitioned Interior Ministry officials to produce Nazeerullah, but also received no response. Finally, he wrote to the appellate court of Nangarhar, which referred the case to the primary military court of the eastern zone. The family has learned nothing about Nazeerullah’s whereabouts.

Other cases of enforced disappearance were similar. A woman whose son was taken by the Taliban in September said that no one would tell her where he was detained: “They do not allow me to go to the district [district governor or police] ... I spent hours and hours in front of the governor’s house, no one allowed me in or even asked me. I do not know what to do.”

Taliban officials have also threatened family members who have sought information about their detained relatives. One resident of Chapahar district, Nangahar, who accompanied “Jaffar” to the Taliban’s General Directorate of Intelligence Facility No. 90 in Kabul to inquire about the whereabouts of Jaffar’s brother, whom the Taliban had detained in September, said that the guard at the gate told him: “They will arrest you too, do not inquire about these people.” Jaffar said “I was afraid but what can I do? I want to know, [he’s] my brother.”

In another case, a man said that his brother and nephew went to the Nangarhar chief of police to ask the whereabouts of a relative. The Taliban commander who met them threatened them, saying: “Shut up, you have come here to release Daesh people.” Another man said, “You want to ask [about your relative], but you do not dare ask.”

Even if they are not threatened, family members seeking information about detained relatives have said that Taliban authorities refuse to acknowledge the detention or provide any information. A neighbor of a man who was the victim of an enforced disappearance by the Taliban for alleged connections to ISKP said: “When you go to see the Nangarhar [provincial] governor [looking for a relative], they won’t let you in. At the gates they tell you go ask elsewhere [referring to other government departments]. Just to deter you.”

Nasir

Nasir, an alleged ISKP member, had been arrested by the former Afghan government some time before the Taliban takeover. He was serving time in Bagram jail, and when the Taliban took over, he broke out. He started a fruit cart business in Charahi Butkhak in Kabul in late August. Local workers said that on September 20 “vehicles full of Taliban [came] and took Nasir with them.” His brother went first to the District 12 police station, and then he and other family members went to the Bagrami district governor’s office in Parwan province, but they were repeatedly told that the Taliban had not detained anyone by his name. A family member said that we “just want to know he is alive ... if he had done anything [wrong], put him on trial.”

Not all cases reported in Nangarhar and Kunar provinces involved people accused of affiliation with ISKP.

	<p>Ahmadullah</p> <p>Ahmadullah, 25, served in the military in the previous government. His relatives said that in September, Taliban forces surrounded the Surkhab Pul area of Jalalabad city and went directly to Ahmadullah's house. The Taliban authorities used loudspeakers to pressure the family to hand him over and threatened to enter the house if they did not. In front of a gathering of villagers, the family handed Ahmadullah over to the Taliban forces.</p> <p>Three days later, Ahmadullah's father received a call telling him that his son's body was lying in the Khalis Baba area. The father said that when he saw his son's body, Ahmadullah's name and village were written on a paper attached to it. The bodies of about seven or eight others were also found in the area.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	07/06 Minimum salary to be happy living in WA?
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/this-is-how-much-money-to-need-to-be-happy-living-in-washington-study-finds
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Western Washington has grown wildly in the last few decades, and the cost of living has grown right alongside it. In order to be happy living in Washington, you will need a big chunk of change.</p> <p>According to a survey from Purdue University and GoBankingRates.com, the minimum salary needed to be happy in Washington is \$117,180.</p> <p>While that is the dollar amount to find happiness, the survey claims "emotional well-being" can be found in the \$66,960–\$83,700 range.</p> <p>"Globally, we find that satiation occurs at \$95,000 for life evaluation and \$60,000 to \$75,000 for emotional well-being," said the study's authors in the journal. The study also noted that the ideal income for "life satisfaction" in North America is \$105,000.</p> <p>Washington's unemployment also fell from a staggering 16.8% in April 2020 to a low 4.2%.</p> <p>"It's important to keep in mind, though, that 'happiness' is subjective," wrote the authors. "The cost to live comfortably can vary from person to person."</p> <p>States that require a higher salary than Washington to be happy include Oregon, California, New York and Hawaii:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oregon: \$136,605 • California: \$149,310 • New York: \$155,610 • Hawaii: \$202,965 <p>Among the states with the lowest salary needed to be happy were Mississippi, Kansas, Oklahoma and Alabama, though with the rising costs due to inflation, every state requires over \$87,000 annual salary in order to live happily.</p> <p>Tacoma and Seattle rank among the worst-run largest cities in the U.S., according to data from WalletHub. The report weighs the quality of city services—infrastructure, safety, economy, education, health—against the total budget per capita spent on them.</p> <p>GoBankingRates said it determined the cost-of-living-adjusted minimum salary needed to be happy based on income satiation levels identified by Purdue University researchers. It also factored in each city's cost of living index, unemployment rate, as well as property and violent crime rates.</p>

HEADLINE	07/07 A year's worth Northern Calif. rain missing
SOURCE	https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-07-07/a-years-worth-of-california-rainfall-has-gone-missing
GIST	<p>Much of Northern California received only two-thirds of its normal rainfall for the last three years, according to meteorologist Jan Null of Golden Gate Weather Services.</p> <p>“It’s like working for three years and only getting paid for two,” he said.</p> <p>Some places, such as Ukiah, Santa Rosa and Mount Shasta City, did even worse, logging about half or less of their normal precipitation.</p> <p>Null compiled a summary of the three rainfall seasons from July 1, 2019, to June 30, 2022, and the figures starkly illustrate the severity of the drought in the state.</p> <p>Places in Southern California fared better, with downtown Los Angeles getting 77% of normal rainfall for the three-year period, and San Diego coming in at 85%. But precipitation in the northern part of the state is much more consequential for Southern California and the Golden State’s elaborate plumbing system than what falls south of the Tehachapi Mountains. Most of California’s significant precipitation occurs in the north. Rainwater and snowmelt are captured there in huge reservoirs such as Shasta Lake and Lake Oroville.</p> <p>If he could pick a single number to characterize the state’s water situation, Null said, it would be the Northern Sierra 8-Station Index. What he called the “bellwether” stood at 61% of normal for 2019 through 2022, less than two-thirds of what would be expected.</p> <p>The index is the average of eight precipitation-measuring sites that provide a representative sample of the northern Sierra’s major watersheds. These watersheds include the Sacramento, Feather, Yuba and American rivers, which provide a large portion of the state’s water supply.</p> <p>And that supply is tight. According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, most of the state is in at least severe drought, and about half of the state is in extreme drought. Nearly 12% of California is considered to be in exceptional drought, the worst category. Because of the state’s Mediterranean climate of generally rain-free summer months, there’s no immediate prospect for relief. Moreover, a La Niña climate pattern in the tropical Pacific, which typically results in dry winters in Southern California and the Southwest, is expected to continue into a rare third year.</p> <p>Rising temperatures and an ever drier climate due to climate change are amplifying drought in what is the driest 22-year period in the West in 1,200 years.</p> <p>December was unusually wet and snowy in the state, but then the spigots were shut off for the next couple of months, which are usually the wettest. According to Null, a strong atmospheric river in December doused the state from about Monterey to just north of the Golden Gate, and from about Yosemite to Oroville. But even within that target area, precipitation numbers came up short. San Francisco, for example, ended the 2021-2022 rainfall season with 82% of normal, but for the three-season period ending June 30, it had only 56% of normal.</p> <p>Places such as Ukiah and Mount Shasta City, for example, weren’t as lucky. They ended up with 43% and 45% of their three-year normals, respectively, because they were north of the December atmospheric river and too far south for storms that wet down the far northwestern corner of the state, according to Null. Santa Rosa ended up with only 55% of its three-year normal.</p> <p>This missing year of rainfall contributes to the drought and a tinder-dry environment that is much more prone to wildfire. The National Interagency Fire Center’s outlook for July calls for above-normal potential for wildfire north of the Interstate 80 corridor. Above-normal potential wraps southward from there toward the Tehachapi Mountains through the coastal ranges and the central and southern Sierra Nevada.</p>

HEADLINE	07/06 Drinking water 'forever chemicals' levels
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jul/06/us-drinking-water-pfas-toxic-forever-chemicals-epa-tests
GIST	<p>A Guardian analysis of water samples from around the United States shows that the type of water testing relied on by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is so limited in scope that it is probably missing significant levels of PFAS pollutants.</p> <p>The undercount leaves regulators with an incomplete picture of the extent of PFAS contamination and reveals how millions of people may be facing an unknown health risk in their drinking water.</p> <p>The analysis checked water samples from PFAS hot spots around the country with two types of tests: an EPA-developed method that detects 30 types of the approximately 9,000 PFAS compounds, and another that checks for a marker of all PFAS.</p> <p>The Guardian found that seven of the nine samples collected showed higher levels of PFAS in water using the test that identifies markers for PFAS, than levels found when the water was tested using the EPA method – and at concentrations as much as 24 times greater.</p> <p>“The EPA is doing the bare minimum it can and that’s putting people’s health at risk,” said Kyla Bennett, policy director at the advocacy group Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility</p> <p>Ties to cancer</p> <p>PFAS are a class of chemicals used since the 1950s to make thousands of products repel water, stains and heat. They are often called “forever chemicals” because they don’t fully break down, accumulating in the environment, humans and animals. Some are toxic at very low levels and have been linked to cancer, birth defects, kidney disease, liver problems, decreased immunity and other serious health issues.</p> <p>The Biden administration in June announced new actions aimed at protecting drinking water from PFAS contamination, saying the chemicals “pose a serious threat across rural, suburban and urban areas”. The administration has allocated \$10bn to specifically address PFAS and other contaminants in drinking water.</p> <p>But critics say when it comes to identifying PFAS-contaminated water, the limitations of the test used by state and federal regulators, which is called the EPA 537 method, virtually guarantees regulators will never have a full picture of contamination levels as industry churns out new compounds much faster than researchers can develop the science to measure them.</p> <p>That creates even more incentive for industry to shift away from older compounds: if chemical companies produce newer PFAS, regulators won’t be able to find the pollution.</p> <p>“Industry has had a 70-year head start and we’re never going to catch up,” said Graham Peaslee, a University of Notre Dame researcher.</p> <p>Many researchers consider a type of test known as “total organic fluorine” (TOF), which detects a PFAS marker called organic fluorine, to be the most accurate way to test water samples.</p> <p>The European Union is proposing switching to a TOF test, and states such as Maine, which are planning to regulate PFAS as a class instead of regulating individual compounds, will need more robust testing to enforce their laws.</p> <p>“The TOF isn’t the end-all, but it’s telling us there’s more fluorine out there, and we need to look for it,” Peaslee said.</p> <p>Clean water advocacy groups last year urged the EPA to use more comprehensive tests that they said would “give us a better understanding of the totality of PFAS contamination”, but the agency told the Guardian it currently has no such plans.</p>

In a statement to the Guardian, the EPA said it “continues to conduct research and monitor advances in analytical methodologies ... that may improve our ability to measure more PFAS”.

For researchers worried about PFAS contamination, that is not good enough.

“We’re looking for and studying less than 1% of PFAS so what the heck is that other 99%?” Peaslee asked. “I’ve never seen a good PFAS, so they’re all going to have some toxicity.”

Guardian sampling

The samples analyzed for the Guardian were collected from municipal systems and private wells, including both filtered and unfiltered water. An accredited lab conducted the EPA 537 test, while Peaslee checked the samples using a TOF method he developed.

In unfiltered water from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, the levels were 10 parts per trillion (ppt) in the EPA 537 test and 164ppt in the TOF test.

Water samples collected in Titusville, Florida, also showed a large disparity – the EPA 537 test found PFAS at 16ppt, while the TOF test found PFAS levels at 176ppt. In Bethesda, Maryland, the results were 18ppt from the government-favored test and 185ppt from the TOF.

Similar results were seen in sampling from other communities, including in Wisconsin, North Carolina, Arizona and Massachusetts.

Though the EPA doesn’t have limits in place for mixes of PFAS compounds, many public health advocates say no level over 1ppt is safe.

One of the samples in the Guardian analysis – water from Oscoda, Michigan – showed 13.7ppt in the EPA 537 test and 0 (non-detect) for the TOF test. Testing of a sample from Gustavus, Alaska, found 127ppt in the EPA 537 test, and a lower amount – 102 ppt – in the TOF test, considered within the margin of error.

The EPA and industry have long argued that many newer PFAS that can’t be detected are safe. However, most new compounds have not been independently reviewed, and the types of PFAS that have been studied have been found to be toxic and persistent in the environment, said Bennett.

“There are so many PFAS that we don’t know anything about, and if we don’t know anything about them, how do we know they aren’t hurting us?” Bennett asked. “Why are we messing around?”

The test results for Portsmouth, where water tested by the TOF method revealed levels around 16 times higher than the EPA 537 method found, is probably due to some combination of issues, Peaslee said.

Though firefighting foam used at Pease air force base in Portsmouth and elsewhere is largely made with PFAS compounds the EPA test can detect, the chemicals, once in the environment, break down into different PFAS compounds that can’t be detected.

It’s also possible that other sources are polluting the region’s water with newer PFAS that can’t be read by the EPA test.

The results are “surprising”, said Andrea Amico, a public health advocate who in 2014 first sounded the alarm about Portsmouth’s PFAS contamination, and who collected the water sample from Portsmouth used in the Guardian analysis.

“That’s left me with more questions about what’s making up that total and makes me want more testing in my community,” she added.

Health problems

In the region around Cape Canaveral, Florida, which includes Titusville, some suspect PFAS contamination stemming from two military bases and Nasa facilities is behind their health problems.

Since 2019, Titusville utility officials have either reported no PFAS in the city's drinking water or have said detections were at levels considered by regulators to be safe. But the TOF analysis for the Guardian detected 176ppt in the water there.

Among the water samples collected for the Guardian, some came from the home of a Titusville resident who suffers thyroid problems, a condition linked to PFAS exposure. The resident, who declined to be named, can't afford a water filtration system, a situation that underscores the fact that many low-income people can be at more risk than people with higher incomes.

"They used [the EPA 537] results as cover," said Stel Bailey, who has suffered from PFAS-linked ailments such as Hodgkin's lymphoma and works with the clean water advocacy group Fight for Zero. "We need better testing technology so we know where to focus."

Contamination stemming from airport and military facilities has also plagued Tucson, Arizona, for years, and new measures put in place by state and local officials are supposed to largely eradicated the problem.

But while water from the city's south side showed just 2ppt in the EPA 537 test, the TOF found a level 24 times higher, according to the Guardian analysis. That means PFAS remains a concerns for Tucson resident Mary Ann Granillo, who suffers from lupus, a PFAS-linked disease that already killed two of her family members.

Granillo said she can't afford a water filtration system, and bottled water is an expensive addition to her monthly bills. The family washes dishes, cleans clothes and showers in contaminated water. She fears nothing is likely to change.

"It really worries me a lot," she said.

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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	07/06 Different kind of violent extremists?
SOURCE	https://www.npr.org/2022/07/06/1110013040/the-highland-park-suspect-breaks-the-mold-on-violent-extremists
GIST	<p>Moments after law enforcement authorities disclosed the name of a "person of interest" in the deadly shooting at a July 4th parade in Highland Park, Illinois, extremism researchers, journalists and some members of the public rushed online. They discovered an extensive trail of digital activity believed to be linked to Robert "Bobby" Crimo III, now the named suspect in the mass shooting. But sifting through the trove of memes, photos, music, rap videos and more, extremism experts agree: There is no clear political or ideological motivation.</p> <p>Instead, many experts on extremism and technology say this suspect's activity fits with a still-emerging profile of mass shooter. Rather than falling neatly into categories familiar to law enforcement and the public, such as white supremacists, radical Islamists or antigovernment militants, it requires an understanding of dark, online subcultures that overlap and feed into each other in ways that glorify violence and foster nihilism. Alarming, these experts say these online milieus have been tied to an increasing number of mass shootings over time.</p> <p>"I've described this as sort of like a mass shooter creation machine," said Alex Newhouse, deputy director of the Center on Terrorism, Extremism and Counterterrorism at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies. "A lot of these communities are designed to spin out mass shooters over time, over and over and over."</p>

A mass shooter "culture"

Researchers who've combed through Crimo's digital footprint say the content is strikingly unoriginal.

"It's just like a zoomer spin on zoomer trends and mass murders that have already been done before," said Sarah Hightower, using a term that refers to members of Generation Z. Hightower is an independent researcher focused on the extreme far right and online cultic movements.

For example, Hightower noted one video that shows a cartoonized version of the suspect with a long gun in a bloody confrontation with law enforcement officers.

"He's not the first mass shooter to animate himself into a Columbine massacre-type animated music video," she said. Hightower said a man who committed a mass-murder/suicide at a grocery store in Pennsylvania in 2017 did the same.

Extremism researchers said the suspect's online content offers to the public a carefully curated persona that fits with an image of mass shooters, styled on the killers in the 1999 Columbine school massacre. They said this image has come to hold a portion of young people in certain online communities in thrall.

"It's actually very comparable to Hillary Clinton referring to Trump supporters as 'deplorables,' and the thing that happened was that they then chose to embody that label and wore it on hats and T-shirts and it became a proud in-group label," said Emmi Conley, an independent researcher of far-right extremist movements, digital propaganda and online subcultures. "Similarly, the way that we have previously talked about lone actor violence — in that they are 'mentally ill,' they're confused, they aren't part of anything, they are 'schizophrenic young men' off doing their own thing, distinct from any other groups or actors — they started to embody that."

Conley said this purposeful embodiment of an almost cartoonized version of a mass shooter is intended to play to a "known aesthetic" of what such an individual looks like in the popular imagination, and also to claim the brand of being a mass shooter.

"[Crimo] doesn't fit into an individual ideology, because ideology is irrelevant in this case," said Conley. "The thing that starts to tie this type of violent actor to other types of violent actors is not ideological, it is aesthetic. "

An emphasis on aesthetics over ideology

The visual language that Crimo used in his curated online presence included elements that researchers say is common with a particular young, online subculture. It includes neon or strobe lights and quick cuts between video scenes, accompanied by techno lo-fi music. Newhouse also noted that Crimo's seemingly chaotic and random selection of memes and images echoed what he's seen with suspects in other mass shootings, such as the ones in Uvalde, Texas and Oxford, Michigan.

"It is all designed to be, one, shared; two, completely incomprehensible to anyone like us who are looking onto it; and three, to be a way of breaking down a person's natural reluctance to commit violence," said Newhouse. "It is designed to break a person's brain."

Conley added that the fixation on aesthetics also extends to how would-be shooters in these online milieus consider the optics of their attacks.

"Every mass shooting that's been committed with an AR 15, somewhere it was a little bit about doing a mass shooting with the AR 15 because that is the 'mass shooter weapon' — not just because it is the most effective weapon," she said. "There have been so many mass shootings now that it is a performance art. There is a particular way you do it. There's a particular way you look."

Toxic online spaces

The aesthetic has tied together a web of different digital subcultures which are deeply nihilistic, which use dehumanizing language, and which glorify violence. Often originating on the website 4chan, they include

fan communities devoted to mass shooters and serial killers, and online forums devoted to sharing gory content. While experts noted that most people who participate in these fringe communities do not go on to commit mass shootings, they said these are spaces that produce conditions for violence.

"Understanding these things as loosely knit ecosystems [and as] more nebulous culture movers, rather than a groups of memberships, is going to be the first step to getting better at visualizing this threat," said Conley.

Bad actors seeking to nudge others toward real-life violence have been known to participate in these spaces, said Conley and Newhouse. Additionally, horror and dark alternate reality game and immersive fan fiction communities are also part of this complex web of subcultures.

"The idea is that everyone within these communities sort of lose track of what is real and what is fake," said Newhouse, "and they start fantasizing about and fetishizing violence as sort of this end all be all of the essence of existing."

The cartoonized video of an armed Crimo in a bloody standoff with police is one example that researchers point to when explaining how some violent, fringe online communities come to influence users' behavior.

"There's this kind of tendency to 'gore-post,' which is essentially to post shocking, graphic, violent imagery in an attempt to draw some kind of camaraderie between the users in these spaces," said Melanie Smith, head of research at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue US. Crimo appears to have been active in at least one large so-called "gore forum."

Experts agree that it's impossible to determine Crimo's mental health condition from his online content. Newhouse said that the darker alternate reality communities and gore forums are designed to plant the seeds of hopelessness, nihilism and lower one's natural reluctance to commit violence. He said he noted an inflection point on Crimo's timeline that may indicate he had fallen farther away from real-world interaction and further into these online subcultures.

"From what we can tell, he became extraordinarily alienated from both his music audience and his in-person social networks, but clearly began exhibiting the signs of being immersed in these much much deeper Internet communities," he said.

Crimo was a rap artist who released music online. Newhouse said the style of Crimo's latest album was also markedly different from earlier ones.

"Something was going on in that period of time," he said.

But Hightower noted that a key element of these communities is also performance.

"It's like he was going out of his way to sound like he had been detached from reality," she said. "I don't know whether or not this is an affectation that he was putting on or he actually does have a genuine psychotic disorder."

Regardless, Conley said once individuals are exposed to this particular genre of online communities, it can be difficult to return to healthier online habits.

"If you are kind of going down that spiral deeper and deeper into really, really fringe, really violent spaces, there is some point on that spiral where you can't just go back to being normal now," she said. "You've invested too much in this. Too much mental health, too much time, energy. You can't just be like, 'Well, this has crossed the line for me, I'm going to go back now.' It traps you there."

The challenge of intervening

Experts worry that gaps in understanding the conditions that contribute to this kind of mass shooting, as well as legal limitations, could hinder efforts to prevent future, similar attacks.

	<p>"It's not hard to figure out where different violent spaces are," said Conley. "What's hard is what do you do once you find one, if the red flag still falls within free speech territory. Because currently we have no intervention abilities, we only have law enforcement."</p> <p>The complexity and nuance of these subcultures, and how they interact with each, other also presents a challenge for parents who are eager to keep their kids from falling into these online activities. The age group at particular risk, said Newhouse, are 13- to 24-year-olds, primarily male.</p> <p>"If someone doesn't even understand the subculture, how are they going to effectively intervene?" Hightower asked.</p> <p>Still, Newhouse said he believes technology companies, working with journalists, experts and the public, can mitigate the problem through content moderation. He and other experts agreed that Crimo should not be viewed as an outlier, and that need for common understanding of this mass shooter profile will only be more urgent.</p> <p>"He's not going to be the only one, I can tell you that right now," Hightower said. "You'll see more and more of young boys [and men] like [Crimo] popping off. It's not just going to be neo-Nazis and terrorists."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/06 Leader of trucker convoy arrested in D.C.
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-vt/2022/07/06/truck-convoy-arrest-dc/
GIST	<p>The leader of a convoy of truckers that has protested by driving slowly around the Beltway was arrested Wednesday morning in the District after the group drove vehicles to a street on the National Mall.</p> <p>D.C. police said David Riddell was wanted on a warrant from Maryland.</p> <p>Maryland State Police charged Riddell, 57, a trucker from Ohio, with disorderly conduct, disobeying a lawful order from police, and willfully driving a vehicle at a slow speed "impeding normal and reasonable traffic movement."</p> <p>The group had been called the "People's Convoy." A small group spun off and rebranded as the "1776 Restoration Movement" and drove on Interstates 495 and on 270 on July Fourth, slowing traffic.</p> <p>According to charging documents filed in District Court in Montgomery County, Md., a state trooper found multiple trucks stopped in the southbound lanes of I-270 in Gaithersburg on Monday morning. Drivers were honking their horns and waving as traffic backed up a half-mile, police said.</p> <p>The charging documents said drivers directed the trooper to a tractor-trailer driven by Riddell at the front of the line. Police said he had a timer set for 10 minutes and told them that was when the trucks planned to resume moving. The trooper took Riddell's information from his Ohio driver's license and warned him he could be cited or arrested.</p> <p>Not long after the trooper gave Riddell his license back, according to the documents, the timer expired. The trucks then drove south on I-270 at speeds about 40 mph, before making a U-turn and heading north on I-270 and out of the county.</p> <p>Authorities said in the charging documents that state police learned from social media that Riddell was staying at a camp in West Virginia, which is not considered a fixed address. Police said they took out an arrest warrant because without a fixed address for Riddell, they had no way to send him the charges and court orders.</p> <p>Riddell's address in Hillsboro, Ohio, is listed on the warrant. As of Wednesday afternoon, court records do not show Riddell making an appearance before a court commissioner, and it appeared he remained in</p>

custody. No attorney is listed for him in the court documents, and efforts to reach him and relatives were not successful.

It could not immediately be determined how many trucks were in the District. D.C. police did not comment beyond confirming the arrest, which they said was the only one made in connection with the demonstration.

The group was started to protest coronavirus vaccine mandates but has broadened its list of right-wing grievances. For weeks earlier this year, the “People’s Convoy” drove almost daily around the Beltway and briefly came into D.C., mostly sticking to highways. The group left at the end of March after being closely followed by police, who at times blocked entrances into the city.

But Riddell vowed to be more aggressive when the group returned to the nation’s capital. On the Telegram social media app, members said they regretted the way the protests went in March and issued calls in May for “civil disobedience.”

On Wednesday, several people driving trucks converged on a street along the Mall. A participant broadcast the encounter on a live-streamed video that showed a man who appears to be Riddell being handcuffed.

The unnamed person said police were ordering the truck off the street to enforce a no-parking area, though truckers could not locate a sign that specifically prohibited trucks.

D.C. police officers briefly formed a line as truckers screamed at them and claimed one of the female demonstrators was injured when she fell from a truck during a confrontation with law enforcement. An assistant police chief at the scene confirmed that a woman had received medical treatment after a fall but did not offer further details of the encounter.

“We haven’t done anything wrong,” one of the truckers yelled at officers. “There is no sign that says no trucks.” The man called officers “cowards” and vowed to remain on the street until tow trucks arrive.

“There should be freedom in the United States,” the man yelled.

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HEADLINE	07/06 Italy 2nd most-wanted mobster extradited
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/06/italy-second-most-wanted-mobster-rocco-morabito-extradited-28-years
GIST	<p>A convicted mobster who was one of Italy’s most-wanted fugitives and reputedly one of the world’s most powerful drug brokers, has arrived in Rome, following his extradition from Brazil after 28 years on the lam.</p> <p>Rocco Morabito held the No 2 position on the list of Italy’s most wanted and dangerous mobsters. He was convicted two decades ago in absentia of drug trafficking as part of the ’Ndrangheta organized crime syndicate, which does billions of euros in cocaine business.</p> <p>Italian police describe him as one of the world’s top drug brokers. Morabito, 55, must serve a 30-year prison sentence after being convicted in absentia by a court in Milan in 2001.</p> <p>He was arrested in May 2021 by Brazilian police in a joint operation with Italian and US investigators. Morabito had earlier been arrested in Uruguay in 2017, but escaped from prison there two years later. Italian police have been searching for him since 1994.</p> <p>Calabria-based anti-mafia prosecutors say Morabito played a big role in cocaine trafficking between South America and Milan, a key distribution point for the drug to be sold elsewhere in Italy and across Europe. In addition to drug trafficking, Morabito has been convicted in Italy of mafia association.</p>

When he was captured in 2017 in Uruguay, Morabito was living in a luxury villa in a seaside resort using an alias and a false Brazilian passport, authorities said at the time. During his arrest in a Montevideo hotel, police also seized a 9mm gun, 13 cellphones and a stash of cash, as well as a Mercedes coupe.

Still No 1 on Italy's list of most-wanted mafia bosses is Matteo Messina Denaro, considered to still wield top power in Cosa Nostra in Sicily despite being a fugitive since 1993.

In recent decades, the 'Ndrangheta has eclipsed the Sicilian mafia in power and scope, spreading its branches throughout much of Europe as it launders cocaine revenues by infiltrating or buying up legitimate businesses like restaurants and hotels, investigations have found.

A small army of turncoats helped prosecutors put many Cosa Nostra bosses behind bars for life. The 'Ndrangheta, built around strong family ties, has been less hurt by devastating betrayals of crime clan loyalties.

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HEADLINE	07/06 US Marshals operation nabs 1,500 fugitives
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/law-enforcement-and-public-safety/u-s-marshals-national-violence-reduction-operation-captures-more-than-1500-fugitives/
GIST	<p>The U.S. Marshals Service has concluded a high-impact fugitive apprehension initiative aimed at combating violent crime in 10 cities with a significant number of homicides and shootings.</p> <p>This 30-day initiative, called Operation North Star (ONS), resulted in the arrest of 1,501 fugitives, violent criminals, sex offenders, and self-identified gang members in Baltimore, Chicago, Houston, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, Memphis, New Orleans, New York City, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C.</p> <p>Operation North Star focused on fugitives wanted for the most serious, violent, and harmful offenses, including homicide, sexual assault, robbery, or aggravated assault. Operation North Star investigators prioritized their efforts to include individuals using firearms in their crimes, or who exhibited risk factors associated with violence.</p> <p>“The Justice Department is committed to doing everything we can to protect our communities from violent crime and end the plague of gun violence,” said Attorney General Merrick B. Garland.</p> <p>“Operation North Star reflects the approach we are taking across the Department to work in partnership with law enforcement agencies and communities to identify and hold accountable those responsible for the greatest violence. I am grateful to the U.S. Marshals Service and the many federal, state, and local task force partners who carried out this operation, and who continue to work to keep the American people safe each and every day.”</p> <p>Throughout the month of June, the U.S. Marshals Service used its broad arrest authority and network of task forces to arrest individuals wanted on charges, including 230 for homicide; and 131 for sexual assault. In addition, investigators seized 166 firearms, more than \$53,600 in currency, and more than 33 kilograms of illegal narcotics.</p> <p>“The Marshals remain committed to assisting state and local law enforcement with reducing violent crime in our most vulnerable communities,” said U.S. Marshals Service Director Ronald Davis.</p> <p>“Operation North Star was focused on areas where local law enforcement has seen a large number of homicides and shootings. By partnering with our local and state partners, we are able to hone in on the most dangerous criminals who cause the most harm. I am very proud to lead an agency that is always willing and ready to do the work necessary to quell the violence affecting so many of our cities.”</p>

Notable arrests resulting from Operation North Star:

- On June 4, Great Lakes Regional Fugitive Task Force (GLRFTF) members arrested Jose Galiano-Meza, 28, who was wanted out of Douglas County, Kansas, for homicide. Galiano-Meza was the suspect in a hit-and-run that resulted in the death of a 10-year-old girl from Eudora, Kansas. A collateral lead was sent by the District of Kansas to the GLRFTF in Indianapolis where Galiano-Meza was located and arrested.
- On June 6, members of the Eastern Pennsylvania Violent Crime Fugitive Task Force (EPVCFTF) arrested Rashaan Vereen, 34, for attempted homicide, aggravated assault, and firearms charges. Vereen was one of the suspects in a mass shooting incident on June 4 on South Street in Philadelphia in which three people were killed and 11 injured. Also arrested in connection with the shooting were Quran Garner, 18, and a 15-year-old suspect.
- On June 8, members of the New York/New Jersey Regional Fugitive Task Force (NY/NJRFTF) arrested Dionte Mitchell, 22, on two counts of homicide and possession of a weapon during a violent crime. Mitchell allegedly shot and killed two female victims after a dispute at a party.
- On June 9, members of the NY/NJRFTF arrested Jaden Baskerville, 21. He was wanted in New York for attempted homicide in connection with a drive-by shooting that resulted in the injury of a seven-year-old girl. Task Force members located Baskerville at a residence in Brooklyn and arrested him without incident.
- On June 14, GLRFTF members arrested Prince Cunningham, 49, for homicide. Cunningham was wanted by the Aurora (Illinois) Police Department on two counts of first-degree murder on a cold case homicide from May 9, 2003. After conducting countless hours of surveillance at multiple locations, investigators spotted Cunningham getting into the driver's seat of a pickup truck. They broke surveillance, approached Cunningham and safely arrested him.
- On June 16, Capital Area Regional Fugitive Task Force (CARFTF) members arrested Robert Bakersville, 28, for homicide. At the residence where Bakersville was arrested, a search warrant was conducted and ammunition and parts consistent with building a "ghost gun" were seized.

The concept behind interagency law enforcement operations such as Operation North Star evolved largely from regional and district task forces. Since the 1980s, the Marshals Service has combined their resources and expertise with local, state, and federal agencies to find and apprehend dangerous fugitives. Operation North Star continued this tradition.

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For more information about Operation North Star visit www.usmarshals.gov.

HEADLINE	07/06 Jailed: spoke Arabic while gun shopping
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/they-spoke-arabic-while-gun-shopping-in-north-texas-and-ended-up-behind-bars/
GIST	<p>DALLAS — Gun ownership has exploded in firearms-friendly Texas and nationwide, and people of color are among the market's fastest-growing segment. But that doesn't mean shopping for a gun is always an enjoyable experience for these new buyers.</p> <p>Hosni and Ibrahim Omeis went to gun stores in Plano and Highland Park in May 2020 and days later ended up behind bars, targets of an FBI investigation. How the FBI became interested in the Plano brothers is not clear from available court records. Authorities said the men reportedly smelled like marijuana inside one gun store and spoke Arabic in another.</p> <p>The Lebanese American men, both in their late 20s at the time, passed a background check and each purchased a 9 mm pistol in Highland Park. When questioned days later by the FBI, the brothers admitted using marijuana. That resulted in criminal charges for lying on a federal form.</p> <p>When they bought the guns, the brothers signed a required form stating they were not unlawful drug users. The form also asks gun buyers other questions, such as whether they are felons, convicted domestic abusers or fugitives.</p>

The two were also later indicted for being unlawful drug users in possession of a firearm and faced up to a decade in prison.

Their case points to a troubling trend that racial minorities in the U.S. have increasingly complained about: extra scrutiny when shopping for a gun.

The Omeis brothers, both U.S. citizens born in California, pleaded guilty to the drug-gun count and were sentenced June 27 to five years' probation in federal court in Dallas. They declined to be interviewed following their sentencing, citing a desire to avoid further law enforcement attention. But they acknowledged feeling their ethnicity played a role in their troubles.

The two North Texas gun stores declined to comment. A lawyer for the Beretta Gallery, which has a store in Highland Park Village, said he was unaware of the matter.

"Even if I had knowledge concerning the situation, Beretta U.S.A. would not comment publicly on a matter of law enforcement investigation," said the attorney, Jeff Reh.

The FBI and U.S. attorney's office in Dallas also declined to comment on the case.

"The FBI can never initiate an investigation based solely on an individual's race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, or the exercise of First Amendment rights," a bureau spokeswoman said. "We will let the judicial proceedings speak for themselves, and do not have additional information to provide at this time."

The government and the defense are barred by court order from discussing certain details of the case or releasing certain documents due to the involvement of unspecified classified information. It is unclear what those documents would reveal.

Faizan Syed, executive director of the Dallas-Fort-Worth chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, said investigations of Muslims and people of Middle Eastern descent sometimes originate from gun store employees.

"That's typically how the FBI gets tipped off about these cases," he said.

Syed said the FBI could have already been aware of the brothers or may have spoken to a relative of theirs about an unrelated matter.

"And then they found that they bought a gun and had this marijuana incident, and they put the two together to bring federal charges for something that most people think is very minor," said Syed, of CAIR, a nonprofit Muslim civil rights organization.

Even though about three dozen states including Texas legalized marijuana for medical purposes, possessing the drug remains illegal at the federal level. Arrests of pot users in states that decriminalized the drug, although rare, have occurred. Even smoking a joint in the privacy of your home is a serious federal felony if you own a gun.

The government does not track these prosecutions. The Washington Post, however, requested data and did its own analysis, reporting last month that prosecutions for lying on gun-purchase forms are extremely rare.

Federal prosecutors in 2019 filed just 298 cases, The Post found. That same year, about 27 million firearms background checks were performed. The newspaper found similar numbers for 2018. The outcome of the prosecutions was not clear from the data.

Hassled while shopping

Syed said the FBI's efforts would be better spent monitoring young white men, who have been mostly to blame for mass shootings and other acts of domestic terrorism in the U.S. in recent years.

The Uvalde shooter who killed 19 elementary students and two teachers on May 24 had bought two assault rifles when he turned 18 as well as copious amounts of ammunition. Salvador Ramos, who was Hispanic, did not arouse any suspicions from gun stores.

Since September 2001, the FBI has made it a practice to knock on the doors of ordinary Muslims, Syed said.

“The end result is that you have tens of thousands of Muslims who are on the FBI’s radar who have nothing to do with anything,” Syed said.

Experiencing hassles while shopping for guns is not limited to those of Middle Eastern descent.

“I can speak for Black Americans ... some of us go through hell in purchasing a firearm,” said Philip Smith, president of the National African American Gun Association, which has almost 50,000 members nationwide.

The National Rifle Association did not respond to a request for comment about discrimination against gun buyers.

Retailers reported that the number of Black people buying guns was up 58% during the first half of 2020, the largest gain of any demographic, according to the National Shooting Sports Foundation, an industry trade group.

A new study co-authored by a director of the Harvard Youth Violence Prevention Center found Black people accounted for 21% of the estimated 7.5 million people who became first-time gun buyers from January 2019 to April 2021.

Smith, who is based in Atlanta, said some gun stores and gun ranges are “at a minimum hostile to Black folks walking in the door.”

“And they don’t care if you’re a doctor, Barack Obama, the Pope,” he said. “If you’re a person of Black skin...they don’t want you in their store. They don’t want your money. They just don’t care.”

Yafeuh Balogun, founder of the Huey P. Newton Gun Club in Dallas, said that when he goes to gun shows or stores, he tries to dress a “certain way” so he doesn’t appear threatening due to racial stereotypes. He said he still gets “extra looks” from gun store clerks, although it was more frequent when he was younger.

“I would get these types of questions: What do you plan on doing with these weapons?” he said. “The unspoken word is you’re not supposed to have that.”

Under suspicion

For the Omeis brothers, a Facebook post similar to what many others post about civil rights played a role in the investigation.

Ibrahim Omeis, 28, studied at Los Angeles City College, and his most recent photos on Facebook show him performing wheelies and other motorcycle stunts.

Hosni Omeis, 30, also a motorcycle enthusiast, attended Lebanese American University and studied business at Los Angeles City College and American University of Beirut, according to his Facebook page. He listed his job as a bartender.

His Facebook page contains funny videos and photos of him with his kitten but also some posts critical of police brutality and racism in the aftermath of the May 2020 killing of George Floyd by a police officer in Minneapolis.

One of those posts was cited by the FBI agent, a counterterrorism specialist, in the complaint.

“A review of the page shows that approximately two hours before attempting to purchase the firearm...multiple videos of weapons and anti-law enforcement rhetoric were posted to the page,” the complaint said. One of those videos was titled, “overzealous cop gets shut down by his sergeant who protects our rights.”

The brothers initially visited the Bullet Trap in Plano while looking for a gun for self-defense, said Hosni Omeis’ attorney, Joey Mongaras, in an interview.

The FBI said the pair smelled of marijuana inside the store, he said. What’s unclear, he added, is whether it was agents or store employees or someone else who noticed the smell. The Omeis brothers decided not to buy anything and later visited the Beretta Gallery, a high-end gun store in Highland Park.

A store employee told the FBI the brothers were “generally talkative, and nothing initially alerted him in any way,” the complaint said.

“However, while the brothers were in the store, they periodically conversed in Arabic in Employee 1’s presence,” the complaint said. “Due to Employee 1’s prior time in Doha (capital of Qatar), he was able to understand some of the conversation the brothers had between themselves in his presence in Arabic. Employee 1 believes that he heard the brothers talking about money in Arabic.”

While in the store, the brothers also mentioned that the gun they liked had a threaded barrel that could accept a silencer, according to the complaint. They each purchased a Beretta handgun and ammunition.

“They were overheard talking about a good starter gun to buy for self-defense,” said Mongaras, the defense attorney. “If you or I were in that store, they (employees) would not have remembered a thing that I said or wanted.”

Such was the case of a white teenager from New York who is accused of gunning down Black shoppers in a murderous rampage at a Buffalo supermarket in May.

Payton Gendron, 18, was evaluated due to mental health concerns last year, but it didn’t stop him from buying AR-15-style rifles legally. The owner of one gun store that sold a rifle to the teen told The New York Times he didn’t remember him.

“He didn’t stand out — because if he did, I would’ve never sold him the gun,” he told The Times.

Mongaras said nothing in court records indicates the FBI was surveilling or tracking the Omeis brothers or was even aware of them before the gun store visits.

Mongaras said Hosni Omeis was also racially profiled two months earlier when Plano police pulled him over — an event used by the FBI to justify the criminal investigation. The officer found less than half a gram of marijuana. The weight of a gram is roughly equal to the size of a pen cap.

The stop was made after Hosni Omeis failed to signal a lane change, records show. Mongaras said the Plano officer decided to arrest his client for an invalid driver’s license instead of giving him a ticket. While searching him, the officer found a marijuana joint and a vape pen with THC oil, records show.

Hosni Omeis has a drug possession case in Collin County stemming from that traffic stop that remains pending, court records show. Plano police do not have a policy like in Dallas to not make arrests for less than 2 ounces of weed, as long as no aggravating circumstances apply.

The FBI searched the brothers’ Plano apartment May 15, 2020, and found the Beretta pistols as well as an unspecified amount of marijuana and drug paraphernalia, the federal complaint said. The brothers agreed

	<p>to speak with agents and admitted to using marijuana, according to court records. Now they are convicted felons who can't run for public office or vote or own guns.</p> <p>Aaron Wiley, a former federal prosecutor who now handles criminal defense, said the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives has jurisdiction over such gun cases.</p> <p>The FBI's involvement in the Omeis case, he said, indicates the brothers may have initially been caught up in some kind of terrorism investigation; one that did not pan out. Mongaras said he didn't know any details about such an investigation.</p> <p>"It's highly unlikely the FBI would use their considerable resources to investigate two local stoners reeking of marijuana trying to purchase firearms from gun shops in Plano and Highland Park," Wiley said.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/06 Tacoma: 14yr-old fatally shot riding in car
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/14-year-old-girl-shot-killed-while-riding-in-car-in-tacoma/
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. (AP) — A 14-year-old girl was shot and killed Wednesday while riding in a car in Tacoma, Washington, police said.</p> <p>The Tacoma Police Department said on Twitter at about 1 p.m. Wednesday that juveniles were inside a car near 19th and Martin Luther King Jr. Way in the Hilltop neighborhood when someone shot at them.</p> <p>The girl who was hit was driven to the 1900 block of South Ainsworth where medics tried unsuccessfully to save her, according to police.</p> <p>Police said the scene remained active and urged people to stay away from the area. No further information was immediately released by police.</p> <p>Tacoma Mayor Victoria Woodards said she was angered by the girl's death, KOMO-TV reported.</p> <p>"Over the last couple of weeks, we have seen a spike in shootings and fatalities and, this morning, a 14-year-old girl was tragically shot and killed," she said in a written statement. "In the face of these ongoing tragedies, I am beyond devastated. I am furious."</p> <p>The mayor said the city will honor the girl's life.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/06 Detroit: officer, suspect killed in shooting
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/detroit-police-officer-and-suspect-both-killed-in-shooting/
GIST	<p>A police officer and a suspect were both killed in a shooting on Detroit's west side Wednesday night.</p> <p>The incident occurred at about 7:40 p.m. local time after officers responded to a report of "shots fired," according to the Detroit Police Department.</p> <p>The officer was struck by gunfire and rushed to a hospital, where he died. Detroit Police Chief James White said in a briefing that the fallen officer, whose name was not released, was a five-year veteran whose own father had also served in the department.</p> <p>"He comes from a long history of law enforcement officers," White said. "His father was a recently retired police officer in this department as well."</p> <p>Police said the suspect, who was also not identified, died of gunshot wounds as well.</p> <p>The suspect "took fire as well, and was shot, after he shot our officer," White said.</p>

	<p>The exact details of the shooting were unclear. White said there was no indication of any other injuries.</p> <p>"The senseless violence ravaging our country has hit far too close to home tonight, Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan said in a statement. "We owe a debt of gratitude to our fallen officer, a debt that we can never repay. He gave his life to serve his city and keep his fellow Detroiters safe. Our entire city is holding his family in our hearts tonight and will be with them every step of the way in the difficult days ahead."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/06 Mass shooter suspect plotted 2nd attack
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/highland-park-mass-shooting-suspect-due-make-1st/story?id=86295098
GIST	<p>The 21-year-old man accused of opening fire at a suburban Chicago Fourth of July parade, killing seven people and injuring dozens of others, plotted another attack in Madison, Wisconsin, authorities said Wednesday.</p> <p>After fleeing the scene of the parade, Robert "Bobby" Crimo III "was driving around, saw a celebration in Madison" and "contemplated another attack," with "60 rounds on his body at that point," authorities said at a news conference Wednesday.</p> <p>But he "had not done enough planning" and decided not to do it, authorities said.</p> <p>After returning from Wisconsin, Crimo was apprehended at a traffic stop in Lake Forest, Illinois, Monday evening.</p> <p>"We are deeply troubled to learn the suspected Illinois parade shooter considered carrying out another attack here," Madison Police Chief Shon Barnes said in a statement. "Mass shootings are far too common in our country. The Madison Police Department has recognized this concern for years, has trained for these incidents and has adjusted our staffing of large events accordingly."</p> <p>Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway said during a press briefing Wednesday it was "deeply disturbing" that the suspected shooter considered opening fire in Madison.</p> <p>"I am thankful that no innocent lives were taken from our city," Barnes added during the briefing.</p> <p>Crimo is charged with seven counts of first-degree murder in the wake of Monday morning's mass shooting in Highland Park, Illinois. More charges are expected, Lake County State's Attorney Eric Rinehart said.</p> <p>There will also be a criminal investigation into the culpability of his father because he sponsored his son's application for a firearm owner identification card in 2019, state police said Wednesday.</p> <p>Crimo, who appeared in court via Zoom for his first appearance Wednesday, showed no emotion as a prosecutor outlined the attack and read the victims' names.</p> <p>Prosecutors said that Crimo confessed to Monday morning's parade massacre.</p> <p>Crimo is accused of taking his legally purchased high-powered rifle and opening fire on parade-goers from a roof of a business.</p> <p>A witness reported seeing an individual with a gun on a building rooftop "scanning the ground with a gun," Assistant State's Attorney Ben Dillon said.</p> <p>On the rooftop, police discovered three empty 30-round magazines and 83 spent shell casings, prosecutors said.</p> <p>On Wednesday, Lake County Major Crime Task Force investigators released a photo of a gun that was found in Crimo's vehicle after his arrest Monday.</p>

Crimo told police he wore women's clothing during the shooting and used makeup to hide his facial tattoos and blend in with the crowd, prosecutors said.

Dillon said Crimo was spotted running from the scene with a black bag over his shoulder, and an object wrapped in cloth fell off the bag and onto the pavement. The object was a Smith and Wesson M&P 15 semi-automatic rifle, Dillon said.

A second weapon, also purchased legally by Crimo, was found in the car when he was apprehended, police said.

Crimo did not enter a plea during Wednesday's appearance and was appointed a public defender.

Crimo was ordered held without bond. He is set to return to court for a preliminary hearing on July 28.

When the gunfire began at Monday's parade, revelers fled in panic, leaving behind empty strollers, overturned chairs and half-eaten sandwiches.

"Bodies were horribly, horribly, horribly injured from, you know, guns and bullets that were made for war -- not for parades," witness Dr. David Baum said of some of the victims.

"The paramedics went quickly and assessed the damages -- saw bodies that were blown apart and put a blanket over them quickly. And then went on to try and help other people," Baum told ABC News. "These are injuries that nobody should have to see."

Authorities believe the massacre had been planned for weeks.

No motive is known, police said. When asked by reporters if the gunman targeted anyone specifically, police said the "shooting appears to be completely random."

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HEADLINE	07/06 Houston: 5yr-old fatally shot in drive-by
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/year-killed-drive-shooting-houston-year-wounded/story?id=86156521
GIST	<p>A 5-year-old child was killed in a drive-by shooting Sunday that also injured an 8-year-old in a Houston neighborhood, Houston Police said.</p> <p>Police received several phone calls around 1 a.m., saying there was a shooting in the city's Greenspoint area, but when they arrived, they didn't find anything, Asst. Chief Chandra Hatcher told reporters early Sunday.</p> <p>About 15 minutes later, officers got word that two children arrived at an area hospital with gunshot wounds. The 8-year-old child is expected to fully recover from their injuries, Hatcher said.</p> <p>Both children were reportedly in a car at a stop sign when a person in another vehicle began shooting, witnesses told authorities. Their mother, Kristena Watters, reportedly drove them to the hospital.</p> <p>"The police have their duty to protect and serve the country. As a mom I have a duty to protect and serve my kids," Watters said at a Houston Police Department press conference on Wednesday.</p> <p>Houston law enforcement officials identified the 5-year-old, who was fatally struck, as Khamaya Dior Donelson.</p> <p>"I have a little boy to live for. But every time I look at him, I feel like I failed him and that's the worst pain for a mom to have to feel," Watters said. "Knowing it's not my fault but feeling like I could have did something."</p>

	<p>Police are investigating the incident and looking at footage from surveillance cameras to aid in the investigation. A suspect is not in custody, police said.</p> <p>Authorities are unsure if the two children were the intended targets.</p> <p>"We do not know a motive," Hatcher said.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/06 Missed chances to stop Uvalde gunman?
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/police-officer-missed-chance-shoot-uvalde-gunman-seeking/story?id=86324401
GIST	<p>There were several missed opportunities to stop the massacre at Robb Elementary School before it started, according to a new assessment of the law enforcement response, which provided new details and laid out a number of "key issues" with the way police handled the shooting in Uvalde, Texas, last month.</p> <p>Among the report's findings: A Uvalde City Police officer armed with a rifle spotted the suspected shooter before he entered the school and had him in his gun sights, but he waited for permission from a supervisor, giving the suspect the chance to enter the school.</p> <p>The "officer did not hear a response [on his radio] and turned to get confirmation from his supervisor. When he turned back to address the suspect, the suspect had already entered the west hall exterior door at 11:33:00," according to the assessment from Texas State University's Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training.</p> <p>"In this instance, the [Uvalde] officer would have heard gunshots and/or reports of gunshots and observed an individual approaching the school building armed with a rifle," said the assessment. "A reasonable officer would conclude in this case, based upon the totality of the circumstances, that use of deadly force was warranted."</p> <p>Had that situation, along with two others identified among the "pre incident" failures, "worked out differently," the report found, "they could have stopped the tragedy that followed."</p> <p>Another problem noted by the report was the fact that the first officer to arrive on the school grounds was not able to see the suspect in the parking lot because he was driving at a "high rate of speed."</p> <p>"If the officer had driven more slowly or had parked his car at the edge of the school property and approached on foot, he might have seen the suspect and been able to engage him before the suspect entered the building," the report said.</p> <p>Twenty-one people, including 19 children, were killed in the May 24 attack.</p> <p>The police response to the shooting has come under intense scrutiny and is now the subject of multiple investigations after it was revealed that officers did not breach the classroom containing the gunman for over an hour.</p> <p>Col. Steven McCraw, the director of the state Department of Public Safety who oversees the famed Texas Rangers, told the Texas State Senate last month that the law enforcement's work that day was an "abject failure."</p> <p>Ultimately, the report found that "it is possible that some of the people who died during this event could have been saved if they had received more rapid medical care."</p> <p>The report was released on Wednesday by the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERTT) Center, which is widely recognized as the leading active shooter and respond training provider in the country. The investigation was ordered by Texas's top law-enforcement agency, the Department of Public Safety, was based on public information as well as evidence -- including body camera footage and</p>

security camera footage -- that was provided by investigative agencies and has so far been kept under wraps.

Outside of McCraw's testimony, information regarding the investigation has remained behind closed doors.

The new report released Wednesday reveals new details about the timeline of events and the police response, as well as the scene that unfolded inside the classrooms once the shooter entered.

Thirty-two seconds after he entered the school, the suspect entered classroom 111, according to the assessment. "Immediately, children's screams could be heard along with numerous gunshots in the classrooms. The rate of fire was initially very rapid then slowed, lasting only a few seconds," the assessment said.

Five seconds later, the suspect exited the classroom, stepped into the hallway and then reentered room 111.

"The suspect then re-enters what appears to be classroom 111 and continues to fire what is estimated to be over 100 rounds by 11:36:04 (according to audio analysis). During the shooting the sounds of children screaming, and crying, could be heard," the assessment said.

In total, the report listed three key issues that occurred before the shooter had entered the building, three key issues that occurred during the initial police response, and a number of other problems that occurred throughout the incident.

Just minutes after the gunman entered the classroom, three Uvalde Police Department officers entered the building equipped with body armor, two rifles, and three pistols, the report found, and seconds later, four more officers entered another hallway. The officers approached the door but were repelled by gunfire and fell back for cover, which the report said is a decision that directly contradicts widely-accepted active shooter training that mandates law enforcement immediately engage the threat, even if it means police have to take fire without protective gear.

"Maintaining position or even pushing forward to a better spot to deliver accurate return fire would have undoubtedly been dangerous, and there would have been a high probability that some of the officers would have been shot or even killed," the report said. "However, the officers also would likely have been able to stop the attacker and then focus on getting immediate medical care to the wounded."

"We commend the officers for quickly entering the building and moving toward the sounds of gunfire," said the report. "However, when the officers were fired at, momentum was lost. The officers fell back, and it took more than an hour to regain momentum and gain access to critically injured people."

The report also noted multiple instances of gunfire while officers were in the hallway of the school. Uvalde School District Police Chief Pete Arredondo has said he believed the incident had transitioned from an active shooter situation to a standoff with a barricaded subject, but the report found that the "during each of these instances [of gunfire], the situation had gone active, and the immediate action plan should have been triggered because it was reasonable to believe that people were being killed."

Arredondo, who has borne the brunt of public criticism after he was identified by DPS as the "incident commander," resigned from his position on the Uvalde City Council in a letter last week.

The failure to enter the classroom, or "loss of momentum," was among the three key problems identified by the report that occurred inside the building. Another was that the door to the classroom had never been locked, which allowed the gunman to enter the classroom freely.

Even though the door was unlocked, the report found that the seven arriving officers "never touched any part of the doors" in the initial convergence on the classroom. Since the very first days after the attack, law enforcement officials have said their response was stymied by a locked door. In a print interview,

	<p>Arredondo said he waited in the hallway as a janitor brought dozens of keys, which he tried on an adjacent classroom door in search of a master key -- but none worked. Eventually a working one arrived.</p> <p>The report also found that throughout the incident, officers had a number of tools, including breaching tools, shields, tactical operators, and CS gas, that should have "increased the capabilities of the officers."</p> <p>The report also found multiple issues with the coordination of the response, including posting teams of officers at both ends of the hallways.</p> <p>"Having multiple teams or splitting an existing team can create a crossfire situation," the report said. "The teams should have quickly communicated, and officers at one end of the hallway should have backed out and redeployed to another position."</p> <p>Additionally, the report noted that response teams should consist of up to four individuals, and any more can "create congestion and interfere with the ability of the team to operate quickly and effectively."</p> <p>Nineteen officers were in the hallway as the massacre unfolded inside the classroom.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/06 Victims of the Highland Park shooting
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/victims-july-4th-highland-park-parade-shooting/story?id=86205738
GIST	<p>A doting grandfather who immigrated from Mexico to give his family a better life, a former preschool teacher who was a faithful member of her synagogue and two parents on a fun outing with their toddler were among the seven people fatally gunned down at a Fourth of July parade in Highland Park, a leafy suburban Chicago town that, according to FBI statistics, hadn't had a previous murder in more than 20 years.</p> <p>But all that changed on Monday when a 21-year-old man who grew up in the North Shore city allegedly opened fire from a rooftop with a high-powered rifle, turning a quintessential American summer holiday scene into a massacre.</p> <p>Five of the victims who were randomly shot died at the scene of the shooting, while one perished at a hospital, according to officials. On Tuesday afternoon, a seventh victim succumbed to his injuries at Evanston Hospital, officials said.</p> <p>More than 30 people were wounded by a barrage of at least 70 bullets that silenced the marching bands, prompted parade-goers to scramble for cover and sent shockwaves across the nation.</p> <p>The wounded ranged in age from 8 to their 80s, authorities said.</p> <p>Here's what we know so far about the people who were killed.</p> <p>Jacki Sundheim, 63 Jacki Sundheim, a dedicated congregant and worker at her synagogue, North Shore Congregation Israel in Glencoe, Illinois, was shot and killed at the Independence Day parade in Highland Park, according to the synagogue.</p> <p>In a statement, the North Shore Congregation Israel described Sundheim as a "beloved" staff member who spent her early days teaching preschool and her entire life worshipping at the synagogue.</p> <p>"There are no words sufficient to express the depth of our grief for Jacki's death and sympathy for her family and loved ones," the synagogue said.</p> <p>Nicolas Toledo-Zaragoza, 78 Nicolas Toledo-Zaragoza was one of the slain victims from the parade, according to his family.</p>

"My grandpa was a funny man. He'd always joke around and be playful with his grandkids. He arrived [in] the U.S. in the '80s and worked around the Highland Park area for many years. He spent his last days swimming and fishing and being among family," Toledo-Zaragoza's grandson, David Toledo, told ABC News in a statement.

Toledo-Zaragoza was a native of Morelos, Mexico.

Stephen Straus, 88

Stephen Straus was the oldest victim to die in the shooting rampage, according to the Lake County Coroner's Office.

His son, John Straus, told the Chicago Tribune that his father was born and raised on Chicago's South Side and described him as "a product of Chicago."

But he said his dad loved his adopted hometown of Highland Park, where he lived for decades and raised a family with his wife of nearly 60 years, Linda, who survives him, along with two sons.

"My dad was just very much a Highland Parker," another son, Peter Straus, told the Tribune. "He lived here, and unfortunately he died here."

A grandfather of four, Stephen Straus enjoyed attending the Highland Park Fourth of July parade every year, Peter Straus said.

"I called him (on Monday) just to wish him a Happy Fourth of July and he didn't respond, which I didn't make much of," Peter Straus, who lives in San Francisco, told the newspaper. "And then news stories started coming out about a shooting in Highland Park."

Katherine Goldstein, 64

Katherine Goldstein was a mother of two adult daughters, an avid bird watcher and someone who loved to travel, a friend told ABC News.

Betsy Backes said she first met Goldstein at a local community center north of Chicago when they were both pregnant with their second children. Goldstein invited Backes to her home and the two mothers began a close, 20-year friendship that ended abruptly when Goldstein was gunned down Monday morning at the Independence Day parade in Highland Park.

In a phone conversation Wednesday morning, Backes spoke glowingly of her "dear friend Katie G.," describing her as an "extraordinary person" and "everyone's best friend" who was "always around for her kids."

She said their daughters grew up together, and the families would go on adventures -- all of them planned by Goldstein.

"No one could plan an adventure like she did," she said.

On Halloween nights, she said the mothers would pass out candy at the Goldsteins' front door while the fathers took the daughters trick-or-treating. Afterward, they would order Thai food and all sit together to eat.

"It is such a happy memory," Backes said. "The little girls were so happy to be out with their daddies, and I was so happy to be with my friend, Katie, and passing out candy to the neighborhood kids."

Goldstein was an avid bird watcher and loved visiting the Chicago Botanic Garden, Backes said. She said her friend was also a great cook, who made salmon for lunch and was always experimenting with new recipes.

"She would cook meals that were so adventurous and fun," said Backes, who spotted a recipe notebook on the kitchen counter when she visited the Goldstein home Tuesday. In it was a list of new recipes Goldstein had planned to try, including a Middle Eastern dish with za'atar spice.

"I looked down and I smiled because I thought, 'Of course you're doing that, Katie. Of course you're doing that,'" Backes said.

Reached by phone, Craig Goldstein, Katherine's husband, declined to speak, telling ABC News he was leaving for a funeral home and wanted to prioritize time with his daughters.

Irina McCarthy, 35, and Kevin McCarthy, 37

Irina and Kevin McCarthy lived in Highland Park and were at the town's Fourth of July parade with their 2-year-old son, Aiden, when they were both fatally shot, according to the Highland Park City manager.

Dana and Gregory Ring, who survived the shooting, told ABC News how another parade-goer found little Aiden alone, scooped him up and handed him to them in the chaos after the rampage.

"Every time I tried to ask him what his name was, the response he gave to me was, 'Mama, Dada come get me soon. Mommy's car come to get me soon,'" Dana Ring recalled in an interview that aired Wednesday on "Good Morning America."

Unsure of what to do, the Rings took Aiden to a nearby fire station and the boy was later reunited with his grandparents.

The slaying of Aiden's parents touched a chord with people from across the nation, who as of Wednesday had contributed more than \$2.5 million to a GoFundMe fundraiser established for the now-orphaned boy.

Eduardo Uvaldo, 69

The Cook County Medical Examiner's office on Wednesday identified the seventh victim to die from injuries suffered in the mass shooting as 69-year-old Eduardo Uvaldo.

Uvaldo's granddaughter, Nivia Guzman, wrote on a GoFundMe page that her family attended the Highland Park Fourth of July parade every year and recalled the event being "filled with happiness and laughter."

"This year was different, this year was filled with fear, sadness and tragedy," Guzman wrote.

In an interview with ABC News, three of Uvaldo's four daughters said nine family members were at the parade when the shooting started. Uvaldo's 13-year-old grandson, Brian, was shot in the arm and Uvaldo's wife, Maria, was hit in the head by shrapnel, the family said. Both are expected to fully recover.

They said Eduardo Uvaldo was shot in the arm and the back of the head.

"We just heard pop, pop, pop. We thought it was fireworks and then my sister saw the shooter," Uvaldo's daughter, Nubia Hogan, told ABC News.

Fred Castro, Eduardo Uvaldo's son-in-law, said he also saw the gunman firing at the crowd from a rooftop.

"We saw him on the roof just kind of going at it," Castro said.

Castro said he made sure other family members got out of harm's way, then went back and stayed with Eduardo Uvaldo.

Another daughter, Susanna Uvaldo-Moncivais, told ABC News that she and her sisters, along with their mother, made the agonizing decision to have their father removed from a ventilator after doctors told them there was nothing more they could do to save his life.

	<p>But she said her father's vitals remained stable and that her family prayed "for a miracle" that was never realized.</p> <p>Eduardo Uvaldo was pronounced dead at 7:47 a.m. on Tuesday at Evanston Hospital, according to the coroner's office.</p> <p>"He's taught us how to be responsible," Hogan said of her father. "My dad worked his whole life without missing a day. He always had the perfect attendance. He's a good man."</p> <p>Eduardo Uvaldo was a grandfather of 13 and a great-grandfather of six.</p> <p>"My grandpa is a kind, loving, and funny man who did not deserve this," Guzman wrote in her GoFundMe statement.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/06 Virginia police: tip stopped mass shooting
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/police-tip-helped-prevent-mass-shooting-july-fourth/story?id=86300179
GIST	<p>Virginia police say a "hero citizen" helped prevent a mass shooting allegedly planned at a Fourth of July celebration in Richmond.</p> <p>News of the thwarted attack comes after seven people were killed and dozens more injured in a mass shooting at a July Fourth parade in a Chicago suburb on Monday.</p> <p>"There is no telling how many lives this hero citizen saved from one phone call," Richmond Police Chief Gerald Smith told reporters Wednesday.</p> <p>Richmond police received a tip from a citizen on July 1 who "overheard a conversation that there was a mass shooting being planned here," Smith said.</p> <p>Acting on the tip that day, police began an investigation along with Homeland Security, Smith said.</p> <p>Officers responding to an apartment in Richmond "saw evidence in plain view that corroborated the hero witness' statement," Smith said.</p> <p>Officers seized two assault rifles, one handgun and 223 rounds of ammunition, Smith said. The suspect, Julio Alvarado-Dubon, 52, was taken into custody and charged with possessing a firearm as a non-U.S. citizen.</p> <p>Police surveilled Alvarado's roommate, identified as Rolman Balacarcel, 38, for several days before he was arrested on Tuesday in Albemarle County, Virginia, on the same charge. Additional charges could be possible for both suspects, Smith said.</p> <p>Authorities allege the two were plotting a mass shooting at a Fourth of July celebration at the Dogwood Dell Amphitheater. The Diamond baseball stadium was another area of concern, Smith said.</p> <p>"They were planning to actually shoot up our Fourth of July celebration," the chief said. "We know what their intent is, but we don't have their motive."</p> <p>The two suspects were not previously known to Richmond police. They are being held in jail on no bond, Smith said. It is unclear if the suspects have an attorney.</p> <p>Investigators are working to trace the weapons seized, Smith said. The FBI is also involved in the investigation, he said.</p> <p>The chief did not provide any further details about the tip, though lauded the man who contacted the police.</p>

"We owe several lives to that one person," Smith said.

Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin tweeted to "thank and applaud the hero in Virginia that stopped a potential massacre by alerting our brave Richmond Police Department officers that work tirelessly every day to protect our communities."

"It's a great reminder that if you see something, say something to your local PD [police department]," he added.

News of the alleged mass shooting comes after the 21-year-old suspect in Monday's Highland Park shooting confessed to the massacre, prosecutors said Wednesday. The suspect allegedly contemplated another attack that day in Madison, Wisconsin, authorities said.

"The success of this particular investigation can only be juxtaposed against the horrors in which the rest of the country has seen," Smith said.

Richmond also experienced a mass shooting early on July Fourth at an after-hours club, where six people were wounded.

Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney called gun violence in the city and nationwide an "epidemic" and urged state and federal lawmakers to change U.S. gun policies.

"We need more -- more policies that will keep people safe, so that these firearms and weapons of war don't get into the hands of the wrong people," Stoney told reporters Wednesday.

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